



PHD

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An examination of the role of Shi'a NGOs**

Aljabiri, Janan

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**The new political settlement in Iraq:
An examination of the role of Shi'a NGOs**

Janan Mudalal Aljabiri

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Social and Policy Sciences

April 2015

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Abstract

NGOs have become well established in the West since the 1980s following the adoption of neoliberal policies, and despite the existence of Islamic NGOs in the Middle East since that time, this phenomenon only emerged in Iraq after the 2003 invasion that toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. A proliferation of NGOs, in particular, within the Muslim Shi'a populated areas has been witnessed over the last decade and this thesis considers these NGOs in the context of what has been termed the Shi'a revival in Iraq (Nasr, 2006). More specifically, the aim is to explore and explain their role in re-fashioning state-society relations in terms of their objectives and functions in "human building" (Literal translation of words used in Arabic by my research participants to denote the role of NGOs in influencing human behaviour and Iraqi cultural values) and state building in the new post war political settlement. Davis and Robinson's (2012) contention that religious NGOs have a multipronged interconnected agenda, which involves: providing for their community; sacralising it, and attempting to influence the law of the state, is drawn upon to construct the analytical framework.

An interpretive approach is used to investigate the roles of three Islamic Shi'a NGOs, for this researcher holds with the perspective that the participants and the researcher construct the knowledge about these roles. The main research tool employed is collecting interview data from members of the Shi'a NGOs, government representatives and specialists in this field, including: international and local organisations, some of which are secular NGOs. Documents and correspondence with academics concerned with social policy in Iraq are also drawn upon for the analysis. The first Shi'a NGO in the study is linked to the Shi'a religious establishment or al-Marja'iyya, being an umbrella NGO titled the 'Civil Dialogue Forum' and the second 'al-Thabat Women's Organisation', with a focus on supporting widowed families and organising Shi'a ritual mourning sessions is one of its affiliates. The third NGO 'al-Mehrab Foundation for Islamic Preaching' is linked to a political group: the 'Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq'.

The key findings of the thesis are that the Shi'a NGOs employ a comprehensive strategy involving three connected, inseparable dynamics: social service provision, theological persuasiveness and having a political role, which they employ to exert influence on the state and society to varying degrees, according to their position in the religious or political landscape. Furthermore, it emerges from the analysis that a culture of clientelism has evolved, whereby the Shi'a NGOs have played a social welfare role which has enabled them to secure political support from the poorer classes. Moreover, sometimes these NGOs also use their political influence with the middle class through their education provision to persuade them to vote for their preferred elections candidates.

Another key finding is that the Islamic Shi'a are divided into two trends of thought governed by consideration of the role clergymen should play in the politics of the state. On the one hand, the Activists believe in direct political involvement and have actively campaigned for their linked political party to gain power, whereas the Quietists do not accept that the religious authorities should be directly involved. However, they did quite openly support Shi'a parties at the time of the first post war general election in 2005 and still have the intention of influencing the state and society indirectly through their programmes. Thus, it is concluded that these two trends have similar objectives but pursue them by different means.

Abbreviations

CDF	Civil Dialogue Forum
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
FSC	Federal Supreme Court
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoI	Government of Iraq
GC	Governing Council
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
IGC	Interim Governing Council
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ESCWA	Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MO	Mass Organisation
MoWSA	Ministry of Work and Social Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCI	National Coordination Committee of Iraq
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDS	Public Distribution System
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SCIRI	Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
SPN	Social Protection Net
TNA	Transitional National Assembly
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

USAID

United States Agency for International Development

Glossary

Adl	Justice in the practice of law.
Ahl-al-Bayt	Descendents from Mohammad's family.
Ajr/Thawab	Religious rewards and incentives, in life and afterlife.
A'lamiyat	Superiority in learning.
Al-Mohassassa	Power sharing based on ethnic and sectarian division.
Ashura	The first 10 days of Muharram.
Caliphate	Successor or leader of Islamic state in Sunni doctrine.
Dawawin	Guest room of a sheikh and tribal members.
Du'a	Non-obligatory prayer, or supplication.
Fatwa	A religious order.
Fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence.
Hawza	Shi'a school teaching Shi'a doctrine.
Hadith	Talks and words of Mohammad.
Hijab	Religious headscarf.
Hoqoq	The poor Muslim's right to the rich's money.
Hussainaia	Buildings dedicated to Shi'a mourning ceremonies.
Ijtihad	The independent interpretation of an Islamic law.
'ilm	Knowledge, or knowledge of Islamic law.
Imamate	System of Islamic leadership succeeding Mohammad.
Imam	In the Shi'a context, a religious leader descending from Mohammad's family.
Iman	Faith.
Jihad	Islamic struggle and war.
Kafil	A sponsor or donor of an orphan.
Kafalat	The sponsorship and donation.
Khums	Religious tax of a fifth of the surplus of one's annual income, practised by Shi'a followers.
Majalis al-Hussain	Shi'a mourning sessions for the life of al-Hussain, the third Imam.
Makfol	The person supported by the Kafil.

Maqasid Al-Shari'a	The purposes and objectives of Shari'a law.
Marja'	Higher ranking religious scholar.
Marja'iyya	Higher religious institution for the Shi'a denomination.
Mathlumiyyat al-Shi'a	The grievance and oppression of the Shi'a sect.
Mobalghen	Preachers.
Mojatama Salih	Good society.
Mosque	Muslim place of worship.
Muharram	First month of the Islamic calendar.
Mullaya	The ceremony leader for women's mourning sessions.
Sadaqqa	Islamic voluntary charity.
Salih	Good deed.
Sayyid	A male descendent of Mohammad's family.
Shafa'ah	Intercession.
Shari'a	Islamic Law.
Shura	Decision making process through consultation for Muslims.
Sin Al-Takleef al-Sharie	The age of religious duty.
Sirat al-Mostaqim	The right path.
Sofoor	Unveiled.
Tahsheed	Mobilisation.
Talih	Bad deeds.
Takaful	Support for one another between Muslim community members.
Taqleef	Religious duty.
Taqlid	Emulation of religious Marja'iyya.
Ummah	Muslim nation.
Wakil (Wokala)	The trustee(s) that implements the work of the Marja in the community.
Wara	Refraining from what is unlawful and forbidden.
Welayat al-Faqih	Jurist guardianship.
Zakat	Compulsory Islamic tax of 2.5 per cent of annual income.

Part 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

Following the invasion of Iraq and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime on 9th April 2003, a novel major change in state-society relations took place, which was the emergence of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that were able to act freely and publicly. Different groups, both secular and religious, were formed by local Iraqis or others who had returned from abroad with experience in this form of organisation. The NGOs, or sometimes called in Iraq, 'civil society organisations', became appealing to some, because they differed from the mass organisations present in Iraq prior to 2003 aimed at reinforcing state power. Some of these organisations had international donors who were willing to fund programmes regarding the promotion of democracy, human rights, and gender equality amongst other issues.

To introduce my thesis subject it is useful to contextualise the emergence of Shi'a NGOs in a wider context of NGOs world, by looking at economic and political background behind the NGOs prominence in particular from the 1980s onwards. Then I turn to other groups of NGOs, that is, the Islamic ones in particular. This chapter is organised in the following order. Section 1.1 introduces NGOs in the Western context, where the concept of NGOs originated; section 1.2 introduces Islamic NGOs in the Middle East, whether from a Sunni or Shi'a sect; section 1.3 explains my positioning in the field, my motivations, while section 1.4 presents the aims and objectives of the research. Section 1.5 presents, in brief, the main contentions and findings pertaining to this research, and, finally, in section 1.6, I set out the contents of the thesis.

1.1 The NGOs in the Western context: motivation and roles

NGOs emerged in Western countries as far back as the eighteen century with aim of defending human rights (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and they became formalised in the

United Nation's Charter in 1945. However, it was not until the 1980s that they really attracted the attention of academia. This interest was stimulated by a new change in the state-society relations, whereby many countries in the West began to reduce their role in social welfare, tasking the community and the private sector to become more involved in providing for those in need. This change came as a result of the adoption of the neoliberal agenda, which advocated privatisation of the public sector and the establishment of NGOs to fill the gap left by the state. This policy perspective was pioneered by the Thatcher administration in the UK and Reagan's in the USA during the 1980s and has been widely adopted across the Western world. The newly formed NGOs were sometimes funded or contracted by the state or run based on the voluntary contributions of the public. Their main objective was to work for poverty reduction, regarding which they established programmes aimed at empowerment, sustainable development, and addressing social and economic concerns (Hulme and Edwards, 1997:14). Some NGOs engaged in social welfare, providing services such as in health and education, whilst others took part in development projects with the goal of helping those who were unable to satisfy their needs through the market.

In sum, the NGOs were established in the West to complement the state's role in social welfare, development and poverty reduction in order to fill the gap left by retrenchment of the public sector. The call for the establishment of NGOs was echoed in other parts of the world, in particular in countries that were ruled by one-party political systems, such as in Eastern Europe and the Middle East where the state had dictatorial control over economic and social policies (Bosch, 1997). In these countries, these organisations promoted the values of democracy, human rights and advocacy. That is, these NGOs formed counterweights to the state political power by providing a platform for political expression, channels for participation and communication for their constituency through training the public on how to be active citizens (Hulme and Edwards, 1997).

These organisations variously called NGOs, charity organisations, non-profit organisations or civil society organisations, have been defined and characterised in

the literature as formal organisations that have self governance; are independent from the state; are apolitical; are non-violent; do not use their activities to gain profit for their organisers; and aim to serve the public good (Uvin and Weiss, 1998; Martens, 2002; Lewis, 2009). Some have a secular agenda, whilst others have a religious mission. Those driven by a religious agenda have been defined as Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), being inspired by religious values that are evident in their operations, discourses, choice of programmes, and their intended outcomes (Sider and Unruh, 2004). However, not all religious NGOs have been formed solely to serve the faith, for some have the goal of instigating change in the state and society driven by a religious-political agenda. This is the case with the Islamic ones in the Middle East and next, I briefly introduce the political background of the formation of this type of NGO.

1.2 The NGOs in the Islamic context: motivation and roles

Islamic NGOs came to prominence in the 1970s-1980s and their formation has been commonly linked to political shifts in countries where they are based. Regarding which, Benedetti (2006) pointed out that the formation of Islamic NGOs took place following the defeat of the Arabs in the war with Israel in 1967, in Afghanistan in 1970s and Muslim Brotherhood linked NGOs were established following the arrival of political openness in Egypt in the 1980s with the aim of assisting the political movement to reach out to the wider community (Kandil, 1997). In Lebanon, the political party Hezbollah has formed its own linked NGOs that are engaged in social service provision, on the one hand and serving the political aim of resistance to Israel, on the other (Jawad, 2009). In Iran, a new group of NGOs or Bonyads were established, some of which were linked or formed by the highest religious authority in Iran following the 1979 revolution, such as Emdad, whilst others were state-organisations, such as Behzisti (Messkoub, 2006). Despite their origins, both types are not only active in social welfare and poverty reduction, but also have the aim of integrating religion with the state. Davis and Robinson (2012) have explained that organisations linked to religious-political movements are motivated by three connected objectives: serving the needs of their community by providing for the

poor; exercising ethical and moral influence on their community in order to make them act in line with the religious order; and they have the intention to influence the law of the state so that is in line with the religion.

However, Islamic NGOs are not a homogenous group, being divided into two main sects: Sunni, and Shi'a. The vast majority of the available literature has focused on organisations from within the Sunni sect (Ahmed, 2009:426; Benedetti, 2006: 855; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Duh, 2014) and consequently, there has been a tendency to consider the terms Islamic NGOs, Islamic social movement and political Islam as referring solely to the Sunni. This is perhaps not surprising, given that this sect comprises the substantial majority of the population of Middle Eastern countries. The literature shows that Islamic NGOs were formed to open up for the Islamic movement new channels to influence society at the grassroots level, to educate it in line with the teachings of Islam and where appropriate, break the ban on political parties by utilising NGOs to mobilise new recruits to their political movement (Kandil, 1997). They are present in Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, and work in opposition to the state aiming to Islamise from the bottom up (Esposito, 1997, Roy, 1994; Zubaida, 1997). These NGOs, in order to provide for their communities in relation to social services, education, medical centres, mosque building and organising collective wedding ceremonies, in line with their religious values to help the poor, use alms collected from a variety of sources. Their key motivation for these activities is to show their constituency what life would be like if they were to gain political power (Davis and Robinson, 2012).

While the Sunni form the majority in the Middle East, in Iraq and Iran this is the case for the Shi'a, and in the Lebanon they comprised 40 percent of the population in 2009 (Hazran, 2009: 3). As mentioned above Hezbollah in the Lebanon and the senior clerics in Iran have established strong Islamic NGOs, which have received the attention of academia. In Iraq, despite Islamic Shi'a NGOs in this country coming to the fore over the last decade, there has been no explicit acknowledgement of the existence of this particular group of NGOs in the extant literature and hence, little is known about their motivation and the impact their activities are having on the state

and society. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature that needs to be addressed, which is of particular importance given the revival of the Shi'a since the war finished in 2003 and their holding governmental power unbroken after the 2005 elections. This is because these particular NGOs are perceived by this researcher as having played a crucial role in helping the Shi'a obtain power through mobilising people for supporting these elections and the current constitution, which many believe to be very much in line with this sect's religious doctrine.

1.3 My positioning in the field

I had not heard about NGOs until I arrived in the UK during the late 1990s. Once in this country, I gradually became aware of these organisations and their role in advocating for people across a wide range of issues. In particular, my attention was caught by those groups that were defending women's rights. As an Iraqi woman, I was intrigued by the numerous publications and magazines as well as the conferences, workshops and meetings being held that focussed on women's issues, in general, and those specifically addressing women's issues in the Middle East. As a result of my interest, I joined with other Iraqi and Middle Eastern women to form women's groups in the UK. In particular, have been concerned about the violation of women rights in countries that are ruled by Islamic governments, where: females from the age of nine in countries are forced to wear Hijab against their personal will; there is legalisation of polygamy; women are deprived of the right to obtain a divorce; and stoning of women in countries, such as Iran, being permitted. This increasing awareness of the hardships of Muslim women in certain countries motivated me to understand the goals and objectives of Islamic groups in the Middle East.

Following the collapse of the previous regime, I visited Iraq in 2004. During this time, when I travelled to the southern part of Iraq, I often saw billboards at the gateways to cities which announced, in Arabic: 'al-Mehrab Foundation welcomes you'. Such notices had replaced the earlier versions that usually only showed the name of the city. This experience initially prompted me to find out whether there

were NGOs operating in Iraq, and if so, what they were doing. In my further visits, I became aware of these organisations' support for widowed families, but it was their role in the elections that appeared to attract the attention of the public more than their social welfare provision. Thus, my motivation in carrying out this research stems from my desire to understand fully the nature and the role of Islamic NGOs in Iraq, post 2003. My personal experience means I am familiar with the Shi'a community, in terms of their culture, traditions, rituals, links, religious establishments, and social relations. Furthermore, my social network has enabled me to access NGOs that are known for their links with either the religious establishment or with political groups. In sum, as an Iraqi woman with insider knowledge of NGOs, awareness of Islamic traditions and with clear understanding of the position of the Shi'a in that country's past, I am of the belief that my background knowledge places me in an ideal position for carrying out this essential research.

1.4 The aims and objectives of the research

This thesis addresses the gap in the literature regarding understanding about Islamic Shi'a NGOs in Iraq. Although the phenomenon of Islamic NGOs, whether from the Sunni or the Shi'a sect, has been present in the Middle East and has been active since the 1970s-1980s, little is known about these organisations in the context of Iraq. Thus, in this study, the goal is to make the Shi'a NGOs visible, clarify their role and examine how they behave in this specific setting. The objectives of this thesis are:

- To offer an explanation for the new and very prominent role which Shi'a NGOs now occupy in Iraq;
- To examine the significance of Shi'a NGOs' role in the reforming of the Iraqi state and society in the post 2003 era.

It has to be noted that the Iraqi law governing NGOs does not classify them according to their mission, be it secular, or religious. Moreover, Shi'a NGOs reject

having their organisations labelled as religious bodies. Instead, they prefer to call themselves simply NGOs or civil society organisations (CSOs) with no reference to religion, because this could give the impression that they are sectarian, which is not a public face they wish to show (Yeginoğlu, 2010). Notwithstanding this contested terminology, in order to meet the objectives of this research, the following research questions are posed:

1. Why have Shi'a NGOs risen to prominence in social and political life in Iraq after the regime change of 2003?
2. What are the main social services, religious, or political activities that they are engaged in?
3. What has been the significance of these services and activities in the reformation of state and society in Iraq post 2003?

In order to fulfil the research objectives and address the research questions, a qualitative methodology is adopted for this investigation. The data is collected through holding semi-structured interviews with representatives from Shi'a NGOs as well with a number of representatives from state and international organisations and other local secular NGOs. Further, an inductive interpretive approach is undertaken for analysis of the data. More specifically, thematic analysis is used so as to bring the experiences of the Shi'a NGOs to the surface.

It is evident that, since 2003, the Shi'a NGOs have been operating in a new political environment. Therefore, to establish the backdrop to this research it has been necessary to explain the post war political settlement. Moreover, the Shi'a NGOs appear to be very important organisations that work to advance the role of Shi'a in the post Saddam political settlement. To probe this effectively, my theoretical framework draws upon my literature review outcomes. That is, in line with the perspective of Davis and Robinson (2012), the Shi'a Islamic NGOs investigated for this research are assumed to engage in three connected roles which all serve their ultimate aim of forming a state and society that act in line with Islam, something explained and justified in detail in chapter 2.

1.5 The contentions and findings of the research

The outcomes of this research offer a new dimension regarding our understanding of NGOs, for it appears that definitions originating in a Western context fail to capture the substance of the Shi'a Islamic organisations that are religiously motivated and are linked to political groups or religious authorities. The Shi'a NGOs were formed with political objectives in mind; they have been funded, guided, and tasked with influencing the morals of individuals and/or the state so as to bring these in line with Islam. In other words, it emerges through the course of this study that Shi'a NGOs are engaged in various ways in politics, whether through their links to elections or through their activities that seek to modify individuals' ways of thinking and thus, they cannot be considered as being apolitical in nature, as has been assumed in other arenas with regards to other NGOs. Moreover, the concept of FBOs is not useful in this discussion pertaining to the Shi'a NGOs because the empirical evidence demonstrates that these are concerned with more than just faith, for they have become an integrated part of the process of political transformation of the state and society.

The Shi'a NGOs investigated in this study, despite their having different affiliations, share the same goal, which is to protect society through supporting poor families, as well as enhancing the role of Shi'a in the post war era . This involves manufacturing individuals who are devoted socially and politically to the Shi'a sect, whether this is through the NGOs helping families that have lost their male breadwinner, or through enhancing the religious values of the family and the wider society. The two trends of the Shi'a, namely Activists and Quietists, work to achieve their ultimate goal of influencing citizens by pursuing two paths. While the former have an explicit political role in supporting their own party and supporting the state, latter exerts an implicit political influence, for it is not linked to any political party, but communicates with the state through the NGOs. Moreover, whereas the Activists on the whole openly promote for their direct links with political parties, the Quietists use their association with the higher religious authority to gain access to state institutions. In sum, evidence shows that both trends wish to Islamize the

state and society, but through differing strategies, as will become clear in chapters 6 to 8.

The outcomes of this work extend our understanding about the motivations underpinning the social services provided by Islamic NGOs. More specifically, the data gathered with respect to the Shi'a organisations indicate that these motivations differ from those linked to social movements in other Arab speaking countries. That is, the Shi'a NGOs do not seek to compete with the state or to replace it, as has been argued by Davis and Robinson (2012) and Wiktorowicz (2004) with regards to other Islamic NGOs. To the contrary, because the Shi'a obtained power in 2005 and have held on to it since then, these Islamic NGOs have considered it their duty to defend the state even to the extent of deterring civil society from becoming involved in political activity common in countries, such as demonstrations, thereby restricting their involvement simply to voting in elections. Moreover because many Shi'a feel obliged to vote for Islamic political parties owing to it being considered a religious duty, in essence they have no free vote to influence the fortunes of the state or society. As such, these NGOs differ substantially from Islamic Shi'a NGOs in the Middle East. For instance, in the Lebanon (Jawad, 2009) they take the role of providing for the minority for in line with the Shi'a let down by the central state through an ideology of resistance to Israel, and have no intention of obtaining state power. Whilst in Iran, influential NGOs were established on behalf of the state by the religious leaders, being tasked with providing for the poor so as to maintain political stability.

The Islamisation process that is often discussed in the Islamic Sunni context, takes on a very different shape with respect to the Shi'a NGOs where a specific process of Shi'aisation can be observed. This refers to the spreading of the Shi'a values, rituals and doctrine that dates back to the time of the schism between the two main sects of Islam, which are used symbolically to enhance the discourse of the Shi'a in both the private and public spheres. This process is carried out top down, through the NGOs' work to Shi'aisize the state, through the citizens voting for a constitution that complies with this doctrine and electing Shi'a candidates for state office. It is also

carried out bottom up through NGO representatives having daily interaction with their constituency as go about delivering their aid to those in need.

1.6 The organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part 1 comprises this introductory chapter (chapter 1), chapter 2 and 3. In chapter 2, the literature review for this thesis is presented. Three important areas are covered: the definition of NGOs in Western contexts, the concept of political Islam, and Islamic NGOs. Drawing on the work of Davis and Robinson (2012), the theoretical framework is set out that considers Islamic Shi'a NGOs as having multifaceted roles that are inseparable, and, as such, constantly feed into each other.

The methodology of this research is explained and justified in chapter 3. This includes the ontological and epistemological assumptions for the study; the methodology for conducting the research; and the methods for collecting and analysing the data. In brief, the ontological assumption underpinning thesis is constructionist and the epistemological approach is interpretive as I am of the view that there is not one reality, but many, and these are constructed by the participants of the research alongside the researcher. The data collection relies on semi structured interviews supported with relevant documents, information gathered from key organisations' websites, as well as correspondence with academics located inside and outside Iraq. The data analysis is explained and justified and there is a discussion of the trustworthiness of this study. My access to the field and the ethical issues concerning the research procedures are explained.

Part 2 contains the empirical chapters. In chapter 4, a profile of the country and a picture of the new changes in Iraq post 2003 are created. In detail, the demographic structure, the post war political settlement, the political economy, and a brief review of the social policies in Iraq are presented. In this chapter it is argued that despite the efforts of international organisations to reform Iraq's economic and

social policies in line with neoliberal agendas, there remains powerful resistance to such changes.

The Shi'a NGOs are introduced in chapter 5 and to this end; the explained how the Shi'a came to be a sect. The pertinent literature related to Iraq is reviewed and the concepts of the Shi'a revival, and Quietism and Activism are introduced. The literature on NGOs in Iraq is very limited and none of this literature, to date, has referred to Shi'a led NGOs specifically as being Shi'a organisations. The chapter discusses the emergence of Shi'a NGOs as a distinct entity post 2003, looking at Shi'a their sources of funding for their activities. The data gathered for this chapter was collected from interviews with state and non-state organisations and provides evidence regarding how NGOs were perceived by the state ministries, international organisations, academics, and the NGOs themselves, some of which are religious and others secular. This chapter serves as a point of entry that facilitates deeper study of the objectives and roles of the Shi'a NGOs in the following chapters.

Chapter 6 addresses the Shi'a NGOs' first objective of protecting the family as a means to protect society at large. This objective is realised through social service provided to widows and orphans as these form the main group targeted by the NGOs. The provision of social services by NGOs from both Shi'a trends is examined and analysed and it is demonstrated that social services or financial support can do more than just address the needs of the poor; they can also secure political support to the service providers.

In chapter 7 there is analysis of the religious influence of this group of NGOs regarding disciplining their constituency's social behaviour, in particular, that of girls and women. There is a discussion of how the Shi'a authorities consider themselves responsible and legitimate actors that are well positioned to inform personal behaviour. The activities carried out by two Shi'a NGOs are explained, and the conclusion is drawn that they have not only had an influence on both widowed families from the poorer classes, but also on women from the middle classes as well.

The political influence of the Shi'a NGOs is considered in more detail in chapter 8 starting with the contextualisation of the experience of the Shi'a NGOs in the sectarian violence and the emergence of the religious authority or al-Marja'iyya as a critical political force in Iraq. Also, the varying strategies that these NGOs use to mobilise people to vote in elections and to influence their constituency's political choices so that they are consistent with Islamic mission are explored.

Chapter 9 contains a synthesis of the findings by considering these in light of the reviewed literature and also addresses the research questions. To begin with the strategies employed by the Activists and Quietists are compared and contrasted. Subsequently, the differences between Islamic Shi'a NGOs in other Middle Eastern countries are highlighted, which leads to discussion on the notion of the Shi'aisation of Iraq and the NGOs' role in this project. Moreover, the chapter contains reflection on the culture of clientelism that has been encouraged by the Shi'a NGOs. Following this, the limitations consideration and suggestions put forward for future potentially beneficial research avenues.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the literature review and identifies the research problem and research questions, drawing up the theoretical framework and setting up “the scene for the coming chapters” (Silverman, 2013: 343). This review is organised in the following order; section 2.2 introduces the emergence and roles of NGOs in both the developed and the developing context by presenting definitions and their main characteristics. Section 2.3 introduces religious NGOs and discusses faith and religion in them. Section 2.3 reviews the existing literature on Islamic NGOs shedding light on these and political Islam, with the aim of explaining their position in relation to social movements of Islamic activism in the Middle East and highlighting their main roles. Section 2.4 focuses on the literature pertaining to Islamic NGOs, which even discusses their role in charity provision and politics. Section 2.5 covers work on Islamic Sunni NGOs in the Middle East, whereas section 2.6 concentrates on Islamic Shi’a NGOs in the region. Section 2.7 introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis and finally there is the chapter conclusion.

2.2 An introduction to NGOs in the developed and developing contexts

The role of NGOs has increasingly attracted the attention of academia in a range of different disciplines including sociology, development studies, political sciences, anthropology and religious studies. Despite the fact that NGOs are not a new phenomena as some organisations emerged in the eighteenth century in Western countries with respect to issues, for example, related to the abolition of the slave trade (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and, in 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded to help those affected by war (Werker and Ahmed, 2007: 4). In addition, the Congress of International Associations held in 1910 and attended by 132 bodies, addressed a variety of issues, such as public health and agriculture (Lewis, 2009: 3). Other organisations appeared during this era, such as Save the Children that was founded in 1919 to address the resultant traumas of the First

World War (Werker and Ahmed, 2007: 4). The increasing interest in NGOs is attributed to their resurgence in the 1980s serving economic and political, social, and cultural objectives.

A distinct thread in the literature notes the resurgence of these organisations in the 1980s taking the form of what Clarke and other authors have described as an “associational revolution” (Clark, 2008: 3; Salamon and Anheier, 1998:x) in the face of the political and economic changes that occurred in the post Cold War era. The rise of NGOs was not, according to Hulme and Edwards, an “accident” nor did it emanate from voluntary initiatives of the public or certain groups (Hulme and Edwards, 1997: 5), but rather it was necessitated by these new developments. Lewis explains the revival of NGOs as the result of efforts of the supporters of neoliberal policy agendas to roll back the state and bring them into the social welfare arena (Lewis, 2009:3). Under the neoliberal agenda, NGOs serve as a complementary if not alternative to public sector service delivery, aimed at helping to achieve “good governance” by working with governments, the market, and the third sector to achieve the desired outcomes (Lewis, 2009: 4).

Changes surrounding neoliberalism marked a transformation in state-society relationships in developed countries, in particular the USA and the UK, as evidenced by privatisation and other market reforms. At the same time, this offered civil society organisations, such as NGOs, the opportunity to take part in social welfare issues in response to the state’s retreat (Carothers, 2000:19) and this would appear to form the *first* and key objective for the encouragement of the establishment of these organisations. The structural adjustment programmes and economic reforms adopted in line with neoliberal policy assigned to NGOs the role of contributing to poverty reduction (Hulme and Edward, 1997:21); providing for the public (Lewis, 2009: 5) at local, national or international levels. This role for NGOs in social development was pushed by international organisations, such as the World Bank, which embraced the notion that they were realistic vehicles to achieve these goals, in line with the neoliberal policy agenda (Harmsen, 2008: 20).

The *second* objective is that NGOs promote democracy in some countries by providing a platform for the political participation of civil society (Bosch, 1997: 232). That is, this function served by NGOs as identified in the literature is to meet the demands calling for democracy to counterweigh state political power by giving civil society a powerful voice. This can be achieved through the roles played by NGOs in supporting democratisation, political participation (Bosch, 1997: 232) and promoting pluralism (Hawthorne, 2004:3). Under this lens, in the late 1980s the NGOs appeared to offer a platform for political representation and to help in the transition to democracy (Carothers, 2000: 19; Blair, 1997) particularly in countries where the state played a key role in welfare provision, but was also considered to be an authoritarian regime (Clarke, 1998: 25).

These two connected roles of NGOs have appeared strongly in Eastern Europe and the developing world gaining the prominence from the late 1980s onwards. In fact, in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America there was a fascination with NGOs as they appeared very appealing and attracted attention, in particular from advocacy groups who aimed to defend human and women's rights, who were concerned about watching over government performance and monitoring the progress of anticorruption measures (Carothers, 2000: 19). This dimension covered in the literature indicates a third objective of NGOs, that of carrying out advocacy work through influencing public policy (Blair, 1997) and addressing issues related to such matters as gender or ethnic biases (Clark, 1997:43). The aim is to involve the poor and their communities in development decision making and resource allocation (ibid) as well as monitoring state performance in relation to social welfare and political rights. In brief, it emerges that the roles of NGOs in their work regarding economic and political issues and for advocacy have contributed to the refashioning of the relation between the state and society. This has resulted in a proliferation of NGOs in recent years (Lewis, 2009:5). Given their importance outlined in this introduction, in the following subsection the literature pertaining to what constitutes as an NGO, their characteristics and how they have been defined is discussed.

2.2.1 NGOs: Definition and tasks

There is a consensus in the literature that NGOs existed long before the 1980s and that the United Nations has formalised and normalised the terms of reference for non-government organisations (NGOs), post-World War II, in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter of 1945 (Berger, 2003, Martens, 2002). Although initially the UN focused on international organisations and their consultative role for promoting their own purposes, national and regional NGOs have become recognised by the UN (Berger, 2003; Martens, 2002: 271). That is, since the 1980s, the term NGO has become popular at both the national and international levels for organisations inside and outside the UN framework (ibid) and is used by both academics and activists when referring to these organisations. However, despite the increasing levels of interest and scholarship on the subject, NGOs have not yet been defined in a comprehensive manner with a variety of features being attributed to them. For instance, Clarke defined NGOs as: *“private, non-profit, provisional organisations with distinguish legal character, concerned with public welfare goals”* (1998, 2-3)

The NGOs in the literature have been defined as not for profit NGOs, that are organised around the voluntary initiatives of citizens, and are self governed. They have also been attributed with having aim of serving the public good (Willetts 1996, 5; Vakil, 1997: 2060 Martens, 2002:282). According to the World Bank, NGOs are defined as private organizations

“characterized primarily by humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial, objectives... that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development in developing countries”
(cited in Werker and Ahmad, 2007: 3).

Salamon and Anheier highlighted the importance of a robust “structural / operational definition” (1992, 1) and set five core structural or operational characteristics in relation to capturing the features of this type of organisations,

namely, that they are “formally constituted, nongovernmental in basic structure, self governing; non-profit distribution; and voluntary to some meaningful extent” (ibid). Other scholars, Martens (2002), Uvin and Weiss (1998) and Lewis (2009), assert that the main characteristics of NGOs are:

- a) Formal, which means the NGOs have the minimal required organisational structure that enables them to conduct their operations, for example, a constitutional framework, legal statutes and staff members (Martens, 2002: 282). They are also institutionalised in the sense that they have formal and regular meetings for governance and some organisational permanence.
- b) Not for profit: given the aim of the NGO is to serve the public good, therefore, the aim of its governors is not to make profit for the organisation, even if there is a financial surplus from its operations.
- c) Independent from the state: NGOs are defined as societal actors emanating from the public, formed by individuals and they are understood to not include official members, such as government servants (Russett, 1996, p. 67 cited in Martens, 2002). They are independent financially as the membership contributions form a source for their funding, and even if governments fund them, they are not under their control.
- d) Not political: NGOs are understood to be apolitical organisations that do not seek political power and are not interested in promoting candidates for political office. In this way, they are non-political organisations (Uvin and Weiss, 1998: 213).
- e) Non-violent: NGOs are non-violent organisations and this is a distinguishing feature that separates them from those who are using violence, such as Jihadist or radical groups.

- f) Self-governance and voluntary support: NGOs have the capacity to control, manage and supervise their affairs independently (Lewis, 2009). Even though they might employ paid staff, there is also voluntary participation in governing the NGOs by the trustees or the management (Lewis, 2009).

The above definitions and characterisations hold that NGOs are formal organisations formed by individuals based on their voluntary initiatives, aimed at serving the public good and they are not for profit. These organisations are apolitical, nonviolent and independent from the state and self governed.

However, the assertion that NGOs are non-political is rather naïve, for there is substantial evidence that many have the political intention to make social change through unifying the efforts around shared social meanings, drawing on shared values regarding the distributing of resources and carrying out activities to influence resource distribution (Clarke, 1998: 195).

The literature shows that religious NGOs in America as well as European countries have undertaken various roles in shaping their societies, state, and individual behaviour on particular issues in relation to such matters as: the family, abortion, and same sex relationships. In fact, many Christian religious organisations driven by their critical and defensive agenda against modern socio-political developments (secularisation, feminism, the sexual revolution) see these as a serious threat, not only to religion, but to society as a whole. That is, they believe that the stability of society depends on traditional moral values and a patriarchal social order, framed as “family values”. These values are conceived as absolute moral standards laid down in pre-modern sacred texts or authoritative religious teachings (Vic et al, 2013: 4).

These Evangelicals strive to form a religious movement across Protestant denominations, predominantly Baptist and Pentecostal ones, setting themselves in opposition to the modern liberal theology of “mainline” Protestantism emphasizing the final authority of Scripture and individual salvation through a personal

relationship with Jesus, often through a conversion experience”(ibid) The recent history of the American Christian NGOs provides a vivid example of how these organisations allied with the Republican Party have been advocating the ‘New Christian Right’ agenda, in particular, in relation to the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The Salvation Army operating extensively in the United States, as well as in other parts of the world, is one of the largest charity organisations that emphasises divinely ordained strict rules on cultural matters. This organisation has played an active part in shaping the family, community and society’s behaviour in line with the strict religious order, building institutions to sacralise individuals as well as society along with assisting in the creation of a massive network of faith based organisations as alternative institutions to the state (Davis and Robinson, 2012: 142). *Comunione e Liberazione*, the orthodox movement in Italy, also has the goal of establishing a Christian presence in that nation and further afield promoting the Catholic Church’s stance on divorce and abortion, whereby they believe it should be the law of the state. Furthermore, Francois, Paquette, and Bergeron explain that some Christian organisations are motivated by either a missionary or proselytising role, which involves attempting to change one’s belief in line with fundamental religious teaching (Francois et al., 2012: 296).

Other literature reveals that NGOs in countries such as those in the Middle East are linked to political groups like the Muslim Brotherhood (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Robinson, 2004), and are playing a significant role in shaping the state and society in line with Islam. This they are pursuing bottom up through the Islamisation of the society and top down through Islamising the laws and legalisation in accordance with Shari’a law. Moreover, Islamic NGOs linked to Islamic movements have become active players in politics (Clarke, 1998: 23). These religiously motivated organisations, as Davis and Robinson indicate, are often active in serving a wide range of areas related to one or more aspects of social welfare, advocacy and political participation.

2.3 Introducing religious NGOs

The NGOs in developing and developed countries fall into two distinct groups according to their mission: secular and religious. This is an important distinction as the religious NGOs have the objective of influencing individual behaviour in line with the religious teachings (Davis and Robinson, 2012). Here, I shed light on the emergence of the religious form of these organisations as this group forms the focal interest of this thesis. There is a substantial and extensive history linked to church welfare provision as well as to Islamic provision of welfare through Waqf or Zakat (Singer, 2008; Jawad, 2009). The modern resurgence of religious NGOs or faith based organisations (FBOs) in Western countries, such as the USA and the UK, can be traced back to the 1980s and is in accord with neoliberal policies, as mentioned above, aimed at shifting the role of the state away from being the sole provider of welfare and expecting the community to take care of its needs with individuals supporting each other (Bretherton, 2010:32). The turn towards religious organisations was attributed to the Reagan administration in the USA that claimed that religious organisations were more effective than the state and other secular NGOs in welfare provision (Yeginoğlu, 2010: 1). In the 1990s, in the UK there was a shift towards a communitarian approach to social welfare (Bretherton, 2010), which enhanced the view that FBOs could offer a good fit with the community playing an important part in social welfare (Bretherton, 2010:33). Reagan's policy was echoed in the UK by Thatcher's policies of calling for rolling back the frontiers of the state and increased emphasis being placed on the role of the citizen in society (Billis and Harris, 1992). FBOs also serve political objectives and the literature in particular highlights the growth of Christian right wing organisations to secure political support for Reagan's new economic plans inside and outside the USA, in opposition to communism (Clarke, 2008:19). This mobilisation of religious groups and organisations with a numerical strength amounting to millions was translated into political power (Clarke, 2008:19).

Secular organisations that are concerned with development or providing charity are newcomers in comparison to religious charity organisations, as the latter have a

well-established traditional role in providing for the poor. However, there is a dearth of studies that scrutinised the difference between FBOs and NGOs (Davis et al, 2011: 17). The very limited available literature indicates mainly the mission as a distinguishing feature or dividing line between the two groups of NGOs along with the space they seek to occupy in the public sphere (Davis et al., 2011). Davis et al. (2011) state that there is a perception in the developed and developing world that religious organisations have advantages over secular ones, because they are able to: draw on moral and spiritual values; mobilise believers estranged by a secular development discourse; create links at the grassroots level; have a high degree of legitimacy; have international links that enable them to secure funds, thus safeguard their autonomy; and are trusted in their reaching out to rural areas (Davis, 2011: 6). These advantages emerge from the perception that faith or the religious factor has an added value for these organisations (James, 2009: 11), which motivates them to go beyond the secular organisations in terms of aiming for long term change. Whether FBOs have been more or less effective in their welfare provision is not empirically supported (Davis et al., 2011:16; Melville and McDonald, 2006: 77). In relation to this, Peuraca (2003) claimed that beneficiaries make no distinctions between various secular and faith-based organisations in terms of their impact and effectiveness, for they point to deeds rather than mission statements (2003:5), which means that what matters for poor people is “their socio-economic survival and not bulked up ideology” (Harmsen, 2008:410). The difference between the secular and religious NGOs cannot be put down to one form being more effective than the other as there are no data to support this, but rather the religious mission of the latter. Regarding which, the risk of proselytisation during their charity work is considered by some as an unwelcome side effect (Davis et al., 2011).

The question to be posed here therefore, is what does faith or religion mean and what is its significance to the service users or the wider community. To understand the mechanisms and dynamics of how and in which way the faith informs the FBOs, and how it is deployed by them. Sider and Unruh (2004) proposed a typology of religious FBOs in the USA context. They studied the position of faith in the organisation. The key issue that the authors investigated is the degree of religiosity

and the deployment of religion in these organisations': mission statements; founding boards; affiliations; controlling boards; their management; staff; support; and their personal religious practices. This was studied by them in both the organisation as a whole, and in specific programmes carried out by it. Sider and Unruh's analytical framework for understanding faith in FBOs investigates the extent to which the religious content is integrated into the organisation's programmes. According to these authors, the more an FBO becomes imbued with faith, the stricter it is, in particular, regarding the explicitness of its religious message in the programmes that it runs (2004: 120).

The other angle that these researchers adopted to investigate the role of faith is through the organisations' programmes. They considered four aspects: the environment in which the programmes were executed; whether the programme had religious meaning; the symbols that were used in the place or even in the programme's name; and the content of the conducted programme, that is, whether it was focused on or combined with religious activities, such as religious teachings or prayer; the degree of the integration of the religious components in their programmes, and finally, the outcomes of the conducted programmes and the "expected connection between religious content and the desired outcome" (Sider and Unruh, 2004:124).

This analytical framework presented by Sider and Unruh is useful for understanding the faith or religiosity of religious NGOs, but it is Western orientated, mainly focusing on Christian organisations. As such, it has failed to consider two key issues regarding Islamic organisations. Faith in these authors' context is not separated from religion, whilst under Islam the *Iman* or faith, means belief in God; it means the submission to God's will; "trusting and relying on Allah, contentment and pleasure with the will of Allah, and delegation and turning over (the affairs) to Allah" (Shirazi, 2008: 90), whereas religion is concerned with organising the way of life according to God's teachings. That is, it involves organising the relation between the believer and other co-religious people, such as the relation between Muslims and their community as the latter "do not stand alone but are part of the Ummah—

the Muslim community” (Harrison, 2006: 6). Melville and McDonald pointed out that the reference to “the ‘faith based’ for organisations that provide services for the local community...is essentially the language for American welfare reform” (2006: 70). In a similar vein, Jawad (2009), using the experience of the religious welfare organisations in Lebanon, rejected the term FBOs as unsuitable for the Islamic context. She argued that the term faith based to describe religious NGOs is narrow and does not elucidate the role of Islam, as faith and religion (Jawad, 2009:65). That is, faith is only one facet of religion, in particular, in societies such as Islamic ones, where religion is concerned with the social order.

A second shortcoming in Sider and Unruh’s framework is that it has ignored the political dimension of religious NGOs, which is an important feature of Islamic organisations. Islam, for the Muslim NGOs, is a system for living and is inseparable from all aspects of life, be it personal, social, or even political, because it, as repeatedly affirmed in the literature, is a political religion (Rizvi, 2010). Thus, it is necessary to understand the different roles and characteristics of Islamic or Muslim NGOs and to focus on the literature that addresses this group of organisations.

2.4 Islamic NGOs: Islam, charity and politics

The scholarship that has probed the role of Islamic or Muslim NGOs comes from four threads in the literature: international development, social policy (Jawad, 2009) political sciences; and anti terrorism. While a very limited amount of literature focuses on the first, more attention has been paid to the political role of Islamic or Muslim NGOs. Even Alterman and Hipple’s work “Understanding Charity Organisations” (2007) has focused on Islamic NGOs and their links to political groups (Petersen, 2012). This slant might stem from the interest of academia in the politicisation of NGOs following the events of 9/11 regarding understanding the nature of the link between charity organisations and political groups, in particular, whether the NGOs are politically moderate or radical (Petersen, 2012).

Amy Singer's (2008) book about Islamic charity organisations addressed mainly past experience rather than the current Islamic charity organisations. Jawad (2009) also probed religious welfare organisations, showing the importance of social welfare provision in Lebanon as the state role is weak, because it is divided along sectarian lines. Ozkan (2012) highlighted the crucial role of the Muslim NGOs in poverty reduction in particular within immigrant communities through providing aid, investment and setting up projects (2012: 467). Islamic NGOs' social welfare provision is strong in places where the state's role is weak, thus being seen as filling the gap that the latter is unable to breach (Jawad, 2009).

Most of the literature that has studied Islamic or Muslim NGOs has analysed them as the charity arm of Islamic political movements linked to Islamic Sunni organisations in particular those of the Muslim Brotherhood (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Zubaida, 2005; Robinson, 2004). These NGOs have been described in the literature as transmitting belts of the Islamic political movement responsible for linking the political groups to their constituency, (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Robinson, 2004). This literature attributes the emergence of these NGOs with the resurgence of political Islam as a political movement that advocates the return to an Islamic state and thus it is central to the current research to review the literature relating to this phenomenon, a matter addressed next.

2.4.1 Political Islam

A number of authors have defined political Islam as a religious-political phenomenon which aims to bring societies to the path of Islam with the ultimate aim of integrating religion in individual and community lives as this is perceived as being the answer to political and societal challenges (Fuller, 2003: xi). That is, Islam is presented by Islamic organisations as a 'solution' that can provide an alternative. The political motivation for the emergence of the Islamic Sunni movement in countries such as Egypt demonstrates the failure of the Arab nationalist movement and secular states in responding to both economic and political challenges. The political oppression of Islamic parties, despite the relative political openness to take

part in elections, has led these political movements providing social work at the grassroots level in order to increase their standing in society (Mclarney, 2010:131). The social work includes social welfare, education provision, emergency intervention, health projects and other social services. The literature indicates that these endeavours are carried out through NGOs for furthering Islamic objectives, whether in the Sunni context, such as in Egypt, or Shi'a, such as in Iran (Messkoub, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Esposito, 1998; Saeidi, 2004).

The revival of political Islam in modern times became highly visible in the Middle East during the 1960s and 1970s, attracting the attention of academia following the revolution in Iran in 1979 and the formation of an Islamic state in the country (Badran, 2013: 115). The literature shows that the emergence of political Islam began even earlier in those Arab countries (Ayubi, 1991) that were secular and adopted a pan-Arab nationalist identity, whether liberal or socialist in nature (for example, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Iraq and the Yemen), in the 1950s and 1960s (Esposito, 1997). This emergence has been identified in some of the literature as a response from certain political groups that upheld Islam as their political ideology as a way to resolve the "gap between the rich and poor, to halt widespread corruption, to liberate Palestine, and to resist western political and cultural hegemony" (Esposito, 1998, 216).

The second factor refers to a new political environment that began in the 1980s which opened up an opportunity for political parties, including Islamic ones, to contest elections held in the 1980s and 1990s, but which led to their political activities being oppressed. Kandil explained that political oppression of the Islamic movement in Arabic countries, such as Egypt, forced some political groups to seek alternatives so as to reach out to their community, for example, by carrying out apolitical activities such as entering the arena of social welfare provision (Kandil, 1997: 362; Mclarney, 2010: 131). Political Islam as a scheme carried by political groups is based on the notion that both public and political life should be informed guided by Islamic teaching with followers of this using for their political motto the claim that "Islam is the solution" (Ayubi, 1991). Further, they advocate that their

striving for an Islamic state will be led by the orders set by the Prophet, with Islam as their ideology and the Quran serving as their constitution (Karam, 2004: 4). In addition, this movement has announced that it wants to implement Shari'a as opposed to secular law, as they consider the former "as the comprehensive blueprint for society" (Esposito, 1998, 216). The Islamists assert that Islam can provide a political alternative and a comprehensive ideology or framework for Muslim society and not only beliefs and rituals (Esposito, 1998, 217). In this sense, this movement, which is in opposition to the state (Ayubi, 1991), aims to establish universal religious rule at both the state and society levels, a process that is explained in detail in the following subsection.

2.4.2 Islamisation

Islamisation means bringing about changes in a society that result in a closer relationship with the teachings of Islam. Idris defines the Islamisation project as a means to make society:

"wholeheartedly committed to the teachings of Islam in their totality and striving to abide by those teachings in its government, political, economic and social organizations, its relation with other states, its educational system and moral values and all other aspects of its way of life" (Idris, 1976 cited in Ousman; 2012: 7).

Islamisation entails deepening Muslims' knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles and improving their religious practices (Kaag, 2008); converting non-Muslims to Islam; increasing the visibility of Islam in public space (LUCIs Conference, 2012); and reasserting Islamic characteristics for individuals and society, in private and in public (Maskielly, 1984: 15). Strategically, Islamisation involves teaching and instructing Muslims throughout society on how to think, act and conduct their daily life in line with Islam. The aim is to replace secular values with Islamic ones; as those promoting Islamisation perceive the former as unacceptable morally, whether conducted by individuals, the state or society. (Berger, 2010:27). The absence of

Islamic values is blamed on society (LUCIs Conference, 2012) and/or on the political system.

Islamisation is a “complex process” (Kaag, 2008: 11) and it is impossible to be carried out by one group, for it has to be facilitated through a wide network of social and political actors, such as religious authorities, political parties, civil society organisations, and pious Muslims. The experience of the Islamisation processes in different parts of the world, such as Pakistan, Iran, and Egypt, shows that this process can be initiated by formal and informal institutions as well as state and non-state organisations. Islamists use a variety of tactics to achieve their goals for example instead of declaring their adoption of Shari’a law they announced that all laws and rules should be compatible with Islam, which “ultimately amounts to the same”, i.e. the adoption of the Shari’a law (Berger, 2010: 27) without an outright statement. The Islamic groups introduce their message as calling the people to the right path. It can be top down or vertical Islamisation where the intention is to integrate Islam into government institutions (Abbott and Pippas, 2010) or installed from below, a strategy conducted by Islamic NGOs such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Horizontally, Islamisation is exercised through converting non Muslims in which has been commonly employed by a number of transnational Muslim organisations (Petersen, 2012). The process of Islamisation is realised through education, charity provision, political actions, ritual activities, and in “its conventional hiding places” (Petersen, 2012: 34), whereby the religious discourse migrates “into spaces not formally constituted as ‘religious’ – such as NGOs and aid provision” (Mandaville, 2007a: 327 cited in Petersen, 2012: 34).

2.5 Islamic Sunni NGOs in the Middle East

A number of authors have defined Islamic NGOs as non-governmental organisations that drive their mission from a religious tradition or faith. Their members share the same religious ideology, relying for their funding on religious resources and their programmes and operations are inspired and driven by religious tenets. They usually mobilise members from their own religious community (Petersen, 2012:

130; De Cordier, 2009: 609; Clarke and Jennings, 2008: 6; Ragan, et al., 2003: 32). From this, the shared threads are that these organisations drive their mission from religious traditions. Moreover, they are initiated by Muslims, they operate on a voluntary basis and their aims and objectives are to serve the public good in line with their core principles.

From their studies of Islamic NGOs, Benthall and Billion – Jourden, (2003), Benedetti (2006), Petersen (2012), Berger (2003) noted that Islamic NGOs are not homogeneous. Clarke and Jennings (2008) classified religious NGOs into four groups reflecting the most important focus of each, i.e. whether they: are motivated by charitable purposes for those in need; operate have political objectives; have missionary goals of spreading the message beyond the faithful; or are terrorist organisations engaged in illegal acts. Benedetti (2006) divided Islamic NGOs according to whether they were militant or moderate and the criteria used to distinguish these two groups were: their mission, service users, financial resources, employment of staff; and their references to the Ummah (Muslim nation). The first group, the militant ones are strictly Islamic, employ only Muslims and use only Islamic banking, whilst the second group, those termed moderate, are less ideological in their operations, employ skilled workers and serve the wider community, regardless of religion. An example of a moderate organisation is Islamic Relief, which is based in the UK (Petersen, 2012), whereas NGOs that are linked to al-Qaeda, for example, are considered radical.

Esposito confirms that Islamic NGOs aim to change society socially through gradual transformation or Islamisation (Esposito, 1998: 218). This changing comes “through long term education, social action, constituency building, and advocacy, whereby increasing numbers of people become ‘followers’ and eventually espouse the political ideology –cum-social action package” (Karam, 2004: 7). Idris (1997) asserted that Islamisation refers to bringing new change in the socio-political field, at both the private and public levels, influenced by the ethics and values of Islam. In this process Islamic NGOs play a key role. That is, the Islamic movement and its NGOs attempt to influence individuals, family, and the wider society from below in

order to reform the state (Esposito, 1998; Kaag, 2008). Regarding this, Harmsen provides a summary of the ethos of one of the most prominent Islamic social movements in the Arab world: the Muslim Brotherhood, explaining that this organisation aims to achieve the following:

1) The creation of the new Muslim individual in terms of “thinking and faith, ethics and feelings, mind and spirit;” 2) the creation of the new Muslim family, to “provide care and service to men, women, youth and children on equal footing;” 3) the creation of the new Muslim nation carried on the shoulders of the new Muslim family; 4) the establishment of the Islamic government leading “the people to the mosque, and educating them on the ways of Islam;” 5) the unification of the Islamic world politically and an end to the current artificial disunity; 6) the liberation of Muslim lands currently occupied and colonized by kuffar (“nonbelievers”); and 7) to take the universal Islamic message to every corner of the earth (2008:130).

To achieve these aims, Islamic NGOs have concentrated on individuals’ education as well as their social and economic needs so as to create a new Muslim who thinks and behaves in line with Islam. In the same vein, the family is also forms a focus of these NGOs, since they understand that the Ummah or Muslim society is a congregation of families. More specifically, the family is seen by Islamic NGOs as being the smallest fundamental cell of society “where the most important basic rules of a community are exercised and practised” (Mohagheghi, 2006: 71). Hence, the religiosity of society is determined by that of families. In Ra’uf’s words the “family is a political unit of Islamic Umma” (cited in McLarney, 2010: 129), and is one of the most important structures of Islamic politics” (ibid: 136), which is defined as “microcosm of the Umma” (ibid). From the Muslim Brotherhood’s point of view, an Islamised society comprising Muslim families will elect, if the political opportunity arises, an Islamic political system. To achieve these aims three important types of provision are on the agenda of Islamic NGOs.

The provision of social welfare is one of the significant strategies that enables these organisations to reach out to their community. The intention of these NGOs to pursue social welfare stems from two motivations: a) there is the desire to respond to their communities' needs as their compassion emanates from their religious commitment towards the community, as emphasised by the "collective adherence to a God-given moral code and collective responsibility for the public welfare" (Wickham, 2004: 238) ; and b), through social welfare provision, the Islamic NGOs can present themselves as an alternative to state welfare provision or even as an alternative to other peer organisations (Robinson, 2004: 127). Running hospitals, schools, universities are common projects for the Islamic movements. With respect to this, provisions and facilities organised by Hamas for the Palestinian population represent invaluable social support (ibid), whilst those established by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have been described as "a state within a state" (Esposito, 2000:4).

Davis and Robinson (2012) explained that if Islamic groups are able to provide for their community's needs instead of the government, this may increase their legitimacy and credibility in the public eye. By providing social welfare, the religious movement is a) implying the failure of the state in addressing socioeconomic problems (Wiktorowicz, 2004:11); b) enhancing their legitimacy in the community (Hafez and Wiktorowicz, 2004); and, c) giving a concrete visible example of what Islam can provide, through the Islamic NGOs, in contrast to the state's secular modernisation failure. Therefore, as a result, there is a possibility of winning the support from those they have helped and thus, it is not unusual or unexpected that these organisations may recruit followers from amongst the beneficiaries of their social services.

The Islamic NGOs endeavour to influence the values and ethos of their service users. This is part of a wider strategy of Islamisation of the state, bottom up, through the Islamisation of individuals. This strategy is used by the moderate tendency, while the radical organisations tend to call for a top down Islamisation by resorting to coercion aimed at the overthrow of the state, such as that perpetrated

by Jihadists organisations (Esposito, 1998). Moreover, the Islamic social movement organisations strive to spread their religious values by showing the community a strict mandate regarding what is right and wrong and to inform social changes in personal behaviour (Davis and Robinson, 2012).

The intended theological and political influence of the Islamic NGOs has been described as an attempt to assert the Islamic identity of the wider community, as well as at the individual level (Maskielly, 1984: 15). A broad literature addresses the intention of Islamic NGOs regarding shifting society quietly and consistently towards Islamic values (Maskielly, 1984; Kaag, 2008; Milton-Edwards, 2006; Ghanim, 2011; Abbott and Pippas, 2010: 138; Petersen, 2012; Hoodfar, 1999). This purpose stems from the criticisms made by these NGOs pertaining to the moral, societal, and political structures of many present day Muslim societies (Berger, 2010: 27).

Finally, Islamic NGOs endeavour to influence their community's political choice and they do so through promoting the outcomes from the two strategies explained above. That is, through their charity work with the poor and their insistence on a strict adherence to Islamic codes of practice, they shape the future citizens who will give their allegiance to Islamic political organisations (Wiktorowicz and Farouki, 2000: 686).

Zubaida (1997) claimed that the Islamic NGOs aim is to influence and control the masses through social provision. From this author's point of view the religiously inspired networks of volunteers working for the Islamic NGOs form crucial links for transmitting religious and political ideas and practices to individual Muslims. Therefore, Muslim organisations, according to Zubaida (1997) do not give voice to the masses, for they direct their attention to influencing individual behaviours by tasking themselves with ethical pedagogy. Thus, he has described the nature of the relation between these organisations, for example the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, and the masses, as authoritarian (ibid).

The political objective of these NGOs is to secure the service users' votes in elections. Jawad commented on this role, stating that "the most controversial issue related to the initiative of the social welfare in the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is its vulnerability to politicisation" (Jawad, 2009: 92). The empirical data she provided from Lebanon show that there was a "straightforward situation where an aspiring politician or political body offered social services in exchange for political support" (Jawad, 2009:93). In this environment the service users are influenced by the service providers, in particular, and according to Jawad, when it is election season, the latter are directed to win the former's votes.

The literature referred to thus far in this chapter has focused mainly on Islamic Sunni NGOs which comprise the vast majority of Islamic ones in the Middle East. On a much smaller scale, those run by Shi'a are also active in the region, in particular, in Lebanon and Iran and are considered next.

2.6 Islamic Shi'a NGOs in the Middle East

Regarding Islamic Shi'a NGOs, as will become apparent, the most prominent have closely linked their activities with their political agenda and two of these groups are to be found in the Lebanon and Iran. In fact, the literature in relation to this type of NGO primarily focuses on their activities in these two countries.

2.6.1 Hezbollah linked NGOs

The formation of Islamic NGOs from the Shi'a side, in particular those linked to Hezbollah took place as a result of specific political events and such, accords with Benedetti's explanation for their development. They became active in social welfare owing to the political events that occurred in the Middle Eastern region, in general and Lebanon, in particular. More specifically, there was a revival of the Islamic social movement and political Islam in the region as a result of the failure of the Arab Nationalist movement (Esposito, 1997), with the Islamic movement putting itself forward as alternative to the state in a number of countries. In particular, the

revolution in Iran inspired the whole region and Islamic NGOs were formed in order to advance the Islamic political movement so as to overthrow the state (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

In addition, the destruction that was caused by the war of Israel against the Lebanon in 1982 left the country in a dire situation. That is, the war left vast quantities of unmet needs that the Lebanese authorities were unable to address, which led political groups to seize the initiative and provide for their community with the aim of winning their political support (Fawaz, 1995: 14). The literature also documents that the formation of these NGOs, as in the case of other Islamic ones, did not come from voluntarily initiatives by individuals at the grassroots level, but rather were established by the political group Hezbollah with support from sister NGOs in Iran (Fawaz, 1995).

These NGOs shouldered the responsibility of responding to the poor's needs by providing much needed health care, education and income generation through training in skills including sewing, hairdressing, cooking and bread making (Fawaz, 1995). They also set up effective regular rubbish collection (Samii, 2008: 42). Moreover, they gave jobs to the lucky few as well as offered opportunities to work voluntarily for their organisation. The NGOs linked to Hezbollah have provided, for example, 20 percent of its community's need for water (Fawaz, 1995). Their extensive involvement in the Shi'a community in southern Beirut has led them becoming the most important provider of social services to that community. However, these NGOs are not only concerned about providing for the poor, for they also aim to advance religious values in line with Islam, by shaping individual and the community behaviour. To demonstrate their intentions, they run their operations in line with Islamic principles.

The Shi'a NGOs linked to Hezbollah are no different to Islamic Sunni NGOs, for as can be seen above they too are linked to a political party and "use social service networks to build political capital" (Jones, 2011: 3). In fact, the link between Hezbollah and its NGOs is not a secret, for the former uses the latter quite openly to

attract supporters to its political cause, in particular, resistance to Israel. The language of resistance is quite explicit when Hezbollah is providing social services to its community along with its Islamic political ideology. As such, the politicisation of social welfare is plain to see in the operations of Hezbollah and its NGOs (Jones, 2009:1). In sum, through both its social welfare provision and discourse of resistance, Hezbollah has been building a social base for its political movement and also engendering a positive reputation amongst its community (Fawaz, 1995). Moreover, the social and political activities have been delivered through the promotion of an ideology of Islamisation of Southern Beirut.

2.6.2 Bonyads: Social welfare organisations in Iran

In Iran, a new set of organisations appeared after the revolution of 1979 (Messkoub, 2006; Saeidi, 2004), which manifest themselves quite differently to other Islamic NGOs in the Middle East, whether from the Sunni or Shi'a sect. These organisations are seen as being parallel to those of the state or para-state organisations (Saeidi, 2009). In general, as with the rest of the Middle East, NGOs mushroomed in Iran after major political upheaval, in this case revolution. In particular, following the collapse of the Shah's regime and during formation of the post revolution state, a new type of organisations, namely the Bonyads, were established top down by the leading elite who were in charge of the state institutions (Saeidi, 2009).

Messkoub (2006) explained that some of these organisations concerned with social welfare are either linked to the state¹ or are semi-autonomous NGOs, while others were established by al-Khomeini. At the outset, the Bonyads were acting mainly as authoritative financial resources of the Shiite clergy (Vahabi, and Nasser, 2011: 21)

¹ Some of these organisations are considered as being state organisations, such as Behzisti which comes "fully under the government's social policy framework" (Messkoub, 2006:346). It was established in 1980 and is active in social service provision, having supported around 300,000 urban families in 2000. This organisation is contracted by the state to provide for the public (ibid).

and initially their formation was down to the new political elite who had yet to control the state apparatus. However, over the years these organisations have become huge players in the Iranian state (Saeidi, 2004), being responsible for the welfare needs of over 6 million people in both urban and rural areas (Messkoub, 2006). These organisations are autonomous and independent from the state and are not accountable to the latter but to the religious authority as the state has no control over their activities. They became financially powerful in the 1980s and now are huge economic enterprises. The Bonyads that were instigated by the religious authority aimed “to tackle poverty and help the poor families... operates as an NGO and comes under the Supreme Leader (Emam)’s office” (Messkoub, 2006: 245). One of these Bonyads or foundations established based on an order issued by Khomeini is the ‘Emam Khomeini Assistance Committee’ (EKAC). This NGO is engaged in a wide range of social service provision, in particular in rural areas. EKAC offers financial and other support to poor families, such as: providing them with the means for income generation; helping the elderly; provide emergency relief for those affected by natural disasters at the national level (Messkoub, 2006). To conduct its work, this organisation provides also job and volunteering opportunities for thousands of people. Messkoub (2006) explained that in 1998, this NGO employed 15,000 workers, and had recruited 47,000 volunteers. Another example regarding the role of Bonyads in supporting the poor is ‘the Foundation for the Oppressed and Warriors of the Islamic Revolution’, which was established in 1979. This NGO is a non-for profit institution, active in manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. Moreover, it provides social assistance for disabled people affected by war with Iraq and distributed regular financial assistance to 120,000 people in 2000 (Messkoub, 2006: 249). Those war veterans who benefited from this organisation’s social assistance were able to do so owing to government funds channelled through the NGO for distribution (Messkoub, 2006: 249). Its budget, for example in 1998, “was equal to half the government budget for health, treatment and nutrition” (Messkoub, 2006: 248), some being provided by the state and the rest coming from its own business activities as well as public donations.

Other Bonyads that are linked to religious establishment include 'the Foundation of Martyr of the Islamic Revolution', which is also engaged in supporting the needs of those effected by the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. The other group of NGOs allowed to operate in Iran is the 'Red Crescent Society', which was established in 1923 and acts as a charity organisation in health service provision. This NGO was active before and after the revolution in providing these services, running "forty percent of hospitals" (Messkoub, 2006: 247) and its operations are overseen by the Ministry of Health (ibid). Their activities are also directed to those affected by natural disasters, and "public education programmes on humanitarian issues" (ibid). From this, it appears that Shi'a NGOs in Iran have an very important role in social welfare in Iran and run parallel to the state or in Saeidi's words they act as 'para state' organisations (Saeidi, 2004).

In general, the Bonyads have not only been social service providers, for they have also been major protagonists in the post revolution state building in Iran and have in the words of Saeidi: "contributed to the ideological and cultural needs of an Islamic state" (Saeidi, 2004: 480). Thus, in addition to the Bonyads representing one of the largest economic sectors they have also been engaged in other religious and political activities. These have included organising programmes for indoctrination of the youth in order to increase their adherence to Islamic ideology through opening new schools and universities, new research centres and books distribution. They have also assisted the social mobilisation of the supporters of Islamic forces by helping them to occupy higher professional posts in the state apparatus. To summarise, having been established by the leading clergy, the Bonyads have played a huge economic role in the society by providing social welfareindependently of the state, which has led to them being called para state organisations. As such, they represent a unique type of organisation amongst NGOs in the global context.

From the above literature review whether concerned with Islamic NGOs from the Sunni or the Shi'a side, all appear to have three interconnected roles that involve social welfare, religion and politics, but the nature of these roles varies according the specific political contexts where these NGOs work.

2.7 The thesis theoretical framework

Following the discussion of the Islamic NGOs in the Middle East, whether Sunni or Shi'a, it is evident that there is a gap about the Islamic Shi'a NGOs in Iraq. Similar to the rest of the region, Iraq is witnessing the emergence of these organisations from the Shi'a sect. Despite the existence of these NGOs, however, there is no mention of this group and hence, there is no knowledge regarding how these NGOs behave in the social, religious, or political arenas. Consequently it is not known whether they act like Islamic NGOs elsewhere, such as the Sunni NGOs across the Middle East, or those run by the Shi'a in Lebanon or Iran. It could be the case that they function in an entirely different way from all of these. The aim of this research is to address this gap in the literature and to guide the process following research questions are put forward:

1. Why have Shi'a NGOs risen to prominence in social and political life in Iraq after the regime change of in 2003?
2. What are the main social services, religious, or political activities that they are engaged in?
3. What is the significance of these services and activities for the reformation of the state and society in Iraq?

Davis and Robinson (2012), writing in the context of religious organisations, identified three connected key objectives used in varying configurations, that is: serving the community's social needs, providing religious guidance in terms of shaping ethical, moral, and social behaviour and politically influencing the laws of the state so as to bring them in line with their religion. During the field work these three aspects clearly came to the fore as well as their interconnections as being pertinent to the investigated Shi'a organisations. Having completed the data collection, I came across these authors' perceptions regarding religious organisations and realised that these could form the basis for the thesis framework. Hence, the analytical framework adopted is consistent with Davis and Robinson's (2012) observations, whereby Shi'a NGOs are studied as Islamic NGOs engaged in all three of the aforementioned activities. That is, their religion, social welfare

provision and political activities are analysed in turn so as to elicit their interconnections and hence, elucidate what these organisation actually are.

The focal Shi'a were established to serve a religious agenda or at least have been inspired by it (Petersen 2012: 130) and their choice of programmes is permeated with faith (Sider and Unruh, 2004). This encompasses their choice of name for the programme, the content as well as how it is packaged and delivered to their community. The activities of Islamic NGOs are imbued with their religious values, which are expected to serve religious goals as there is perceived to be a "connection between religious content and the desired income" (Sider and Unruh, 2004: 124). These NGOs target specific kinds of beneficiaries who are mainly from their own denomination and their funding is drawn from religious resources common to their community, such as Zakat and Sadaqqa (Harmsen, 2008).

The Islamic NGOs have established their programmes in social welfare in line with their religious values aimed at serving religious objectives. Helping the poor is also essential in protecting religion and life (Kreoessin, 2008). If Muslim lives are secured and their basic needs are met, they can then practise their religious duties and conduct their religious tasks, such as worship, fasting and going to Hajj. If they cooperate and help each other, a good society will be established and ultimately happiness can be restored (Dusuki, 2009: 2). Supporting the poor is important for communal benefits, as it is believed that this will protect human life on earth (Dusuki, 2009: 4) and it is also believed to prevent corruption and social evil (Dusuki and Abdullah, 2007: 32). If the poor's needs are addressed, society will be protected from any chaos or destruction that might be caused by poverty. In cases of social welfare distribution Muslim religious organisations the revenue collected must be distributed "in the community from which it was taken" (Murdock and Khan, 2011: 6). Despite the beneficiaries of social welfare having been clearly defined in the Quran², the literature review has shown that such provision can cover a wide range

² The Zakat is regulated to be distributed to eight groups: "al-fuqara or the poor; al-masakin or the needy; al-'amalina 'alayha or the people appointed to administer zakat; al-mu'allafati qulubuhum or those whose hearts incline to truth, usually interpreted as those recently or about to convert; the

of recipients in many contexts, including: education, orphanages, support for the poor youth in meeting their wedding ceremony expenses (Harmsen, 2008; Wiktorowicz, 2000), poor widows' needs, food distribution at religious events, emergency interventions, development programmes such as training and capacity building, as well as opening health centres and religious libraries; all of which might be covered by religious monies. Prior literature studies have shown that the interventional role of Islamic organisations is an expression of their religious motivation regarding watching out and caring for community members' needs (Davis and Robinson, 2012). Under Shari'a law, essential needs, such as sufficient food and clothing, have to be met in order to protect life (Dusuki and Abdullah, 2005) and to achieve this, Muslims are instructed to remove economic hardship from their co-religious brethren (Murdock and Khan, 2011:6).

The main goals of Islamic NGOs are to make changes to individual thought, have an impact on their social behaviour, influence the family and instil wider society norms and practices, thus bringing the people closer to Islam (Esposito, 1998; Wiktorowicz, 2004). That is, the literature has provided ample evidence that advancing Islamic values by Islamic NGOs, whether from the Sunni or the Shi'a sect, is a significant objective that these NGOs endeavour to bring to fruition. It has been demonstrated that the Islamisation strategy is important for those NGOs acting opposition to the state, as they aim to use it to influence the politics of state bottom up. To this end, they promote a religious way of life, such as encouraging wearing of Hijab, and financially supporting young people's wedding ceremonies.

The experiences of religious political movements in the three Abrahamic religions shows that the outcomes of social welfare by religious NGOs is not limited to helping the poor and enhancing religious values, for it is also political. The Islamic NGOs operate as political mobilisers for their own political visions and alternatives. As such, they link religion to the state and society, with their activism being inspired

'captives', interpreted as war prisoners and once as the enslaved; the debtors; those in jihad or in the way of God; those who are defined as entitled to it, and *ibn as-sabil* or the 'Sons of the road', i.e. travellers in need (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, 2003:10).

by Maqasid al-Shariah or the purposes of Shari'a, which reflects the holistic view of Islam as "a complete and integrated code of life and its goal encompasses the whole life, individual and society; in this world and the hereafter" (Dusuki and Abozaid, 2007: 144).

The Islamic movements in the Middle East have tasked themselves with bypassing state provision, as Davis and Robinson (2012) have pointed out, so as to give people a sense of what an Islamic state would look like if they were to seize power (ibid). In so doing, they expose "the inability of the state to effectively address socio-economic problems...they also offer a concrete visible example of what Islam can provide, in contradistinction to the state's secular modernisation failure" (Wiktorowicz, 2004: 11). The provision for poor families by Islamic organisations, at the same time, enables the providers to enhance their legitimacy in the community (Hafez and Wiktorowicz, 2004); as a result, there is a possibility of winning the support from those they have had already helped. Thus, it is not unusual or unexpected to recruit followers from beneficiaries of their social services. To achieve their political aims, these organisations engage in long term social welfare, whereby they build "a massive, grassroots networks of autonomous, religion-based social service agencies, hospitals, and clinics, clubs, schools, charitable organisations, sidestepping the state, rather than directly confronting it" (Davis, and Robinson, 2012:1). In sum, in line with the perspectives of Davis and Robinson and other literature reviewed in this chapter, I will analyse Islamic Shi'a NGOs in Iraq to shed light on the ways in which they function as well as their similarities with and differences to other NGOs in other contexts. In particular, the three focal NGOs in Iraq, one of which comes from a different religious trend to the others, are investigated to gain understanding of their social, religious and political activities and how these impact on the state and society.

2.8 Religious NGOs and clientelism

The literature reveals that clientelism often plays a role in shaping NGO activities and formulating relationships between them and their service users. Social welfare

provided by NGOs may be utilised to build political support in countries where the state is weak or fails to provide for its citizens (Cammett and Issar, 2010). That is, under such clientelistic relationships there is a trade off of votes or other kinds of partisan support in exchange for social benefits (Piattoni, 2001; 4). The two parties involved consist of the patron, who is of a higher socioeconomic status and the recipient who is often poorly placed in society (Clark, 2004: 946). This informal arrangement is mutual, but grounded upon an unequal exchange of favours (Weitz-Shapiro, 2009) between the providers, who may be politicians or organisations and the clients who are the poor and underprivileged, seeking to secure basic economic needs (Weitz-Shapiro, 2009). The relationship becomes particularly important during election times when power brokers aim to garner maximum support from the electorate by distributing favours (Hopkin, 2006: 2, Piattoni, 2001: 4, Weitz-Shapiro, 2009; Sacouman, 2012). The social incentives received from the patrons cover such things as providing cash, work, or even delivering food (Cammett and Issar, 2010: 389).

Clientelistic relationships are forged by both religious and non-religious organisations (Cavarozzi and Palermo; 1995; Baccaro, 2001). In developing countries, such as Bangladesh, it has been found that they are not “exempt from the problems of clientelism” of NGOs (Baccaro, 2001: 15), but rather, this is a dominant feature that characterises the whole national culture. That is, NGOs in this country have been found to be actively promoting relationships with their service users or clients consistent with clientelism (Baccaro, 2001: 15). In Argentina, Cavarozzi and Palermo (1995) identified clientelistic behaviour being exercised by secular NGOs who were using their service provision to strengthen the power of certain political factions (Baccaro, 2001: 15). Trejo (2009) provided evidence that religious competition between Christian groups, such as the U.S Protestant Church and traditional Roman Catholics in Latin American countries, such as Mexico, has resulted in these groups maintaining a strong hold over the targeted indigenous communities. The Protestants have provided health services, education for the poor and underprivileged as well as translating the Bible into local languages, motivated by their goal to evangelise the most underprivileged and marginalised.

Consequently, both sides of the Christian church have competitively maximised their efforts to provide such services in order to protect their privileged status (Trejo, 2009: 324).

Cammett and Issar (2010) have provided evidence that in countries where there is a powerful sectarian division, the religious organisations strive to cross their sectarian boundaries to secure votes during election times. The experience of Islamic Shi'a NGOs linked to political parties, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, shows that while they endeavour to support their own sect, they also strive to reach out to other sects' constituencies (ibid). Moreover, the Islamic Sunni political groups such as the Future Movement in Lebanon and its linked NGOs follow the same strategy attempting to reach out to Shi'a voters. In sum, there is wide range of evidence from different parts of the developing world showing that social welfare is provided by religious and non-religious NGOs in a clientelist manner aimed at gaining political support for their programmes.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the pertinent literature related to NGOs in terms of their resurgence at the global level since the 1980s. It has shown how this resurgence came about in the developed world to serve the economic and political agenda of neoliberal policies. Economically, the agenda is to expand the role of the NGOs in social welfare so as to be able to reduce state provision. In the developing world, while the economic shift towards neoliberal policies was begun in the same era, it had another objective – that of empowering the role of civil society as a counterweight to the political power of the state.

Amongst these NGOs are those that are religiously motivated. In the West, FBOs providing for the poor instead of the state have been welcomed. However, according to the literature, they have used this provision to influence people's social and political choice. In fact, this kind of influence is common within religious NGOs across the world, whether Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Jewish (Davis and

Robinson, 2012). Issues relating to the family, abortion, and same sex marriage, attracted a lot of attention for Christian organisations that stress the importance of family values throughout society. In addition, some of these organisations have played a role in supporting right wing administrations against communism (Clarke, 2008).

In the Middle East, with the resurgence of political Islam during the 1970s and 1980s, new groups of Islamic NGOs appeared. Despite the political openness that evolved throughout much of the Middle East during this period, many states did not tolerate the political activism of Islamic groups. This led the latter to identify new channels to reach their constituency by forming NGOs. The literature reveals that clientelism was a crucial factor in determining the types of activities and social services provided by these NGOs, who were motivated by a multipronged agenda aimed at shaping the private and the public spheres in line with religion. The experience of the Islamic NGOs shows that their social, religious and political activities have been aimed at Islamising the state, bottom up, which they have pursued by providing social welfare to those in need, whom the state is unable to help.

Chapter 3: Approaching Shi'a NGOs - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter narrates the journey taken for conducting this research and explains the ontological, epistemological, and the methodology adopted. In so doing the approach utilized to address the research questions and decisions made regarding this are justified. This chapter is divided as follows. In section 3.2 the ontological approach of this thesis is explained and in section 3.3 the epistemological stance is considered. Subsequently, in section 3.4 the methodology is presented and in 3.5, access to the field is explained. After explaining the data collection techniques in section 3.6, in section 3.7 the data analysis procedure is presented. The trustworthiness of the study outcomes is addressed in section 3.8 and in section 3.9, the ethical considerations are elucidated, and finally, the chapter conclusion is presented.

3.2 Ontological approach

To conduct research, the investigators are guided by their philosophical assumptions about how they understand the world ontologically and epistemologically. Ontology refers to the nature of being and the nature of reality (Tuli, 2010:99) and concerns the ways we think about the world with respect to whether there is one “‘real’ world ‘out there’ that is independent of our knowledge of it” (Marsh et al. 2002), or whether it is multiple in form. Moreover, it focuses on the nature of reality determining “whether the reality is objective in itself or a product of an individual’s mind” (Muhos, 2011: 26). Based on the researcher’s assumptions as to whether reality is singular or multiple, and exists independently or is constructed, two distinctive ontological approaches can be identified: positivism and interpretivism.

The advocates of positivism regard reality as a “single, objective, and independent of what an individual perceives” (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988: 509) and propose that the social sciences are investigated in a similar way as natural sciences. This

emphasises the underpinning notion that “there are universal laws that govern social events, and uncovering these laws enables researchers to describe, predict, and control social phenomena” (Tuli, 2010: 103). In contrast, the interpretivist or constructivist approach is grounded in the view that the real world is multiple, socially constructed, complex and ever changing (Rowlands, 2005; Tuli, 2010). Under this approach it is contended that individuals “both the researcher and the participant construct their own reality and knowledge” (Tuli, 2010: 105). Further, different individuals and groups of individuals hold different perspectives and “reality is constructed by its participants” (Tuli, 2010: 99).

The aim of this research is to explore the roles of the Shi’a NGOs in the post war era. The ontological stance for this study is interpretivist for the understanding of these roles is constructed by both the participants and the researcher regarding their experience of this phenomenon.

3.3 Epistemological approach

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge (Tuli, 2010:99) and focuses on the question of “how researchers understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:1). Moreover, it addresses the questions of “what is the relationship between the knower and what is known? How do we know what we know?” (Tuli, 2010:99). In line with the ontological perspectives which can be considered as either falling into positivism or constructivism regarding the nature of reality, epistemological approaches are similarly divided.

Given that their ontological approach is that the world is independent from individuals, and is out there waiting to be captured, under the positivist epistemological lens it is contended that reality can be understood through an “organized method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human

activity” (Tuli, 2010:99). Accordingly, there is no attention paid to individual perceptions or interpretations, as fact they are seen as independent entities (ibid). With respect to the epistemological perspective adopted by the supporters of the interpretivism approach, it is contended that “meaning is constructed by individuals in their interaction with their world and is not a fixed, single, agreed upon or measurable phenomena” (Merriam, 2002:3). Therefore, meaning from interpretivist epistemological point of view “is embedded in the participants’ experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the researcher’s own perceptions” (Tuli: 2010:102). Thus, from this point of view, the world is seen as constructed and interpreted by individuals through their interconnection with each other and with their outside world (ibid).

Given the ontological approach of my research is constructionist, I accept that the real world is multiple, socially constructed, complex and ever changing (Rowlands, 2005; Tuli, 2010), the epistemological approach adopted for this study is interpretivist as it is contended that knowledge will be generated from both the participants and the researcher. This stance informs the methodology used to approach the study subject, as both the ontological and the epistemological approach determine the methodology that is used to obtain relevant study data (Tuli, 2010: 99). In sum, the research philosophy is interpretive for it is contended that knowledge lies in people’s experiences and understandings. Moreover, it is constructed by them in the field and is shaped by culture and history. Regarding this research endeavour, the researcher has two tasks, first to make the voice of the researched heard, and second to interpret this voice. This is achieved through carrying out a rigorous process of scientific inquiry and for this, so as to bring the knowledge to the surface, interviewing people in their natural setting is deemed to be the most appropriate methodological procedure.

3.4 The research methodology

Methodology refers to a set of procedures and practices that guides the process of the research and covers the entire process of conducting research (Marczyk et al.,

2005: 24). The methodology incorporates the ontological and epistemological approaches of the researcher into a comprehensive strategy for conducting enquiry (Tuli, 2010: 102). As the ontological stance is constructivist and the epistemological approach is interpretive, the methodology of this study is inductive and interpretive. Based on this, to gain knowledge, the researcher's task is to bring data from the field by personal contact with the study participants in the field over a period of time. This contact and dialogue with participants can provide "deeper insight into the context under study, adding richness and depth to the data" (Tuli, 2010: 100), which, in turn, enable the researcher to "move towards discovering binding principles" (Gray, 2014: 17). This qualitative approach, while introducing new knowledge (Gioia and Pitre, 1990) does not claim to design or generate new theory.

This research endeavour, although inductive in nature, does not ignore extant knowledge regarding the experience of this group of organisations stated earlier in chapter 2, the Shi'a NGOs. Therefore, to some limited extent, this researcher draws on a deductive approach. In fact, the initial choice of this particular group of organisations was influenced by the existence of some prior analysis of this type of NGO which served to provide "judgements" (Gray, 2014: 18) about their important roles. Moreover, I set up the theoretical framework of the study at the outset, that is, has had already made the "researcher's first cut at making some explicit theoretical statements" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 91) before undertaking any further work. Generally, it is assumed that a deductive method is used to test "an hypothesis after which the principle is confirmed, refuted or modified" (Gray, 2014: 17). However, although in this thesis there is no hypothesis, some of the generated knowledge may confirm or falsify concepts when reviewed against the reported experiences of other organisations.

The method of data collection for this research is to conduct informant interviews in the participants' natural setting (Gray, 2014: 17) in order to have first-hand information regarding how they perceive the phenomena under discussion. For this, semi-structured, in-depth interviews are deployed as the main method for

collecting data. This is an appropriate technique as it 'reinforces the purpose of gaining a detailed insight into the research issue from the perspective of the study participants themselves,' (Hennink et al., 2011:109). This method was used because the information lies in people's experiences as well as in the experiences from those in different positions within the community group (Rosenberg, 2008), which made this method, i.e. the interviews, appropriate for gaining insiders' perspectives of the subject in question (Hennink et al., 2011; Litchman, 2014) and face-to face interviews were deemed the appropriate for capturing each informant's perspective (Kumar, 2011). In general, interviews permit understanding, experience and interaction (Mason, 2002: 63).

3.5 Access and the researcher's position: insider and outsider

The sampling of the population of this research was purposive and theoretical. The main criteria for sampling the Shi'a NGOs were that they were non-governmental organisations and Shi'a. In addition, they needed to be known for their activism and/or social work. The interviews with the Shi'a NGOs' representatives were supplemented with others from their counterpart secular organisations; Sunni organisations; and governmental institutions including the directorate of the NGOs as well as international organisations. My motivation for interviewing state and non-state organisations was not to check whether or not the information I was given by the Shi'a NGOs was correct but rather to understand the non-Shi'a groups' views about the Shi'a NGOs' activities, and how their activities are contextualised against the backdrop of wider socio-political change in Iraq.

The focal NGOs were chosen from the two religious trends of Shi'a Quietist and Activist, in order to ensure better coverage of the different views of the Shi'a NGOs roles. This research is not aimed at being a comparative study between the two trends but intends to bring the experiences of two sets of Shi'a NGOs to the surface from both the Activist and the Quietist. In the following, I introduce the three focal NGOs.

The Martyr of al-Mehrab Foundation for Islamic Preaching

The Martyr of al-Mehrab Foundation for Islamic Preaching hereafter (al-Mehrab) is a formal organisation that was established by the Shi'a Activist Marja Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, the leader of (SCIRI)³ in Iran in 2002, with the aim to provide social welfare for Iraqi refugees in Iran, mobilising the students of al-Hawza (the school for Shi'a studies) to work for the organisation. After 2003, the organisation moved to Iraq and is registered in the General Directorate of NGOs. Following the assassination of the founder in September 2003 in a terrorist attack, the leadership was transferred to his brother Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, and after his death, it was reallocated to his son Ammar al-Hakim⁴, who remains a director of al-Mehrab up until the current date (September 2014).

Al-Mehrab's main office is based in Najaf. Najaf is the most significant city for the Shi'a across the world as the Shi'a visit the shrine of Imam Ali based in this city. al-Mehrab has 17 central offices in total, distributed all over Iraq, three of them in Baghdad with the other 14 spread mostly around the middle and southern parts of the country. The offices are linked to 30 branches that are located in counties and 80 Etemadia (trustees) in remote villages. Etemadia refers to an informal setting of a group of people, who run the organisation's work from their own houses. al-Mehrab has eight departments, some of them are specialist and others are supportive. The specialist departments cover Student affairs; Quranic affairs; Charity affairs; and Women and Children's affairs. The supportive departments are public relations; media and communication, financial; and management and administration. The Student Affairs Department is linked to a network of Mobalgheen (preachers) and teachers. Each of these departments has a counterpart section for women. This organisation relies financially on different resources from the state; pious Shi'a donations, such as Khums, coming from within Iraq and also from supportive Shi'a in the Gulf countries.

³ The Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has changed its name in 2007 to Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI).

⁴ The leader of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI).

The Civil Dialogue Forum (CDF)

The Civil Dialogue Forum (CDF) is an umbrella organisation which comprised 26 organisations at the time of its establishment in July 2005 in Baghdad city. The establishment of this organisation could be seen as a process that built up through three subsequent stages. The first and elementary stage might be described as having taken place before 2003 when an informal social network that emulated al-Sistani was already engaged in social welfare and religious provision. This formed a nucleus of the establishment of a number of Shi'a NGO post-2003. The second stage was the reformation of these social networks as civil society organisations on the eve of the elections 2004-2005, and the third stage occurred when 26 of the Shi'a NGOs congregated from nine cities in Iraq (excluding Kurdistan) in a conference that was held in Baghdad in the summer of 2005 and agreed to establish an umbrella organisation termed the Civil Dialogue Forum (CDF)⁵.

The founders of the CDF were mainly the emulators or Moqaldin of al-Sistani. The CDF office is based in al-Kadhimia city. The site of the city is famous for its Islamic religious centre, including the shrine of two Imams; Imam Moussa Al-Kadhim (the seventh Imam) and Imam Mohamed Al-Jawad, the ninth Imam (Alwan, 2006). The CDF's work focuses on enhancing the capacity of NGOs as a fifth establishment; this means, according to the interviewees, to contribute to building a state that is governed by the rule of law and the surveillance of the performance of state institutions. In this sense, the CDF understand their role as to train the statesmen and women to better perform their duties as governors on issues such as fighting corruption. The CDF also trains NGO workers to carry out this role; providing training on issues related to law or any other pressing issues by inviting members of Parliament and other professionals and officials to talk to the CDF audiences. The CDF is linked to al-Sistani and supervised by his office through his Wakil, who is in continuous contact with this NGO, as explained by their interviewees. This relationship according to its members is known for the public. The organisation has

⁵ In my interviews with the CDF in March and April 2013, the interviewees confirmed that the current number of their forum is 12 organisations from at least six cities from the southern part of Iraq.

been able to generate financial resources from al-Marja'iyya, government funding, international organisations, and pious Shi'a donations. The CDF is not involved in activities related to social provision like al-Mehrab, however, their members are carrying out this role, such as al-Thabat Women's Organisation and other NGOs that are active in six cities in the southern and central parts of Iraq, as the interviewees explained.

al-Thabat Women's Organisation

I was introduced to one of the CDF members, who acted as a gatekeeper for the organisation, al-Thabat Women's Organisation (hereafter al-Thabat). al-Thabat is one of the founding members of the CDF. It is a grassroots women's organisation that was established in 2003 by pious, middle class, educated Muslim Shi'a women with a missionary aim to spread the word of Islam through religious education, and through running Shi'a rituals sessions. The original name of the organisation was Monathamat Montatherat Al-Mahdi (Awaiting for al-Mahdi women's organisation)⁶. The name of this NGO raised suspicions amongst the US troops who were patrolling the streets of Baghdad in 2005, and subsequently, the organisation was subjected to an investigation. Following this, it changed its name to al-Thabat Women's Organisation. al-Thabat refers, as explained by the interviewees, to their enduring commitment to the twelfth Imam, al-Mahdi, who went into hiding in 961 AD. The organisation's office is based in a middle class area, on the top floor of a Mosque, in a big hall called Hussainaia⁷. al-Thabat, similar to the CDF, emulate al-Sistani as a Marja, and are not linked to any political groups, for, in line with their Quietist orientation, they are willing to keep away from politics. The organisation, according to the interviewees, was aware that the disconnection from political parties deprive it from financial resources that their counterpart Shi'a Activist organisations, such as al-Mehrab, enjoy. For this reason, the organisation relies heavily on pious donations such as Khums, and Sadaqqa. al-Thabat do not have any

⁶ The Shi'a believe that the hidden Imam will return and save not only Shi'a but the whole world from the atrocities and injustice (Halm, 2007).

⁷ Hussainaia is a hall where Shi'a religious activities are held.

paid workers as it operates depending on volunteers' work, some of whom are teachers, retired educators, and university students.

Turning to discuss the issue of access to the field, this was secured through social connections and friend-of-friend relations. Given that I am originally from Iraq, this positioned me in a place where I am not entirely an insider or an outsider. On the one hand, as an insider, I share "the language, and experiential base with the study participants," (Dywer and Buckle, 2009: 58) which equipped me with a good understanding of the culture traditions, customs, and the meaning embedded in being a Shi'a. Although I may have been perceived as an insider, the participants were not necessarily "more open" as claimed by Dywer and Buckle (2009: 58) for some suspicions remain unresolved for participants in terms of understanding the aim of this research (discussed below). On the other hand, as I had lived abroad and this thesis is conducted in a British academic context, I was able to keep some distance as an outsider from the focal organisations (Kerstetter, 2012: 100). The position of an outsider is "valued for their objectivity and emotional distance from a situation" (Kerstetter, 2012:101). My position was however, differently perceived by participants, and according to each situation. Therefore as a researcher, I could not be described as a complete insider or outsider, and perhaps could best be described as in-outsider, moving beyond "the strict insider/outsider dichotomy ...to the space between" (Kerstetter, 2012: 101).

However despite my nationality and ethnic origin, I had, sometimes, to undergo an 'official examination' (Flick, 2009:108). This stems from some concerns of a political and security nature that were raised by the Shi'a NGOs. As a researcher, information in regard to my professional and political background was touched upon as well as queries regarding my social relations and whom I knew in the UK. This type of personal questions may have helped to establish trust with the researcher. In relation to the research itself, three connected concerns were raised; first; why these organisations were being categorised as religious NGOs and not as NGOs or civil society organisations; secondly; why I was singling out Shi'a organisations as opposed to other groups; and thirdly, what was the risk that the

research would end up making unfair accusations against the organisations⁸. In response to these concerns, my position of insider and outsider changed accordingly, and on some occasions, it shifted from the first query to another, even within one particular interview. Once the dialogue started and a sense of understanding had begun, there was often an accommodation of the role of the researcher as being an insider. The main concern related to security, as one of the interviewees stated, was that this kind of research was only conducted in the past by the UK for the sake of intelligence services in Western countries and in order to spy on their country, Iraq, and its organisations. Given that the Shi'a were oppressed and politically marginalised over many centuries, any attention directed to this group may provoke sentiments and raise such concerns or even be interpreted as a possible threat.

To respond to the above concerns the following strategies were adopted. My first task in gaining access was to share with the interviewees some information about my professional background as a worker in women's charity organisations in the UK for ten years, which made me familiar with the world of NGOs. To this end, I shared with them the name and the website details of my organisation for which I am a member of the management committee. Their other main concern was regarding my choice to research only Shi'a organisations, and my decision to categorize these organisations as FBOs. In response, I presented some background information about religiously motivated organisations or FBOs in the area of social welfare, explaining the economic motivation behind these was to fill the gap left by the state, and that this type of FBOs had been encouraged in the West since the 1980s. This point was not easily accepted by the interviewees as they have the perception that the West is non-religious and cannot be so tolerant towards religious organisations. I brought the discussion to focus on Iraq by explaining the shift, post-

⁸ In an interview with one of these organisations, I was questioned for 40 minutes out of the one hour that I was allocated with an interviewee. Following the discussion about the role of FBOs in social welfare, the result was I had one of the longest interviews which, in fact, lasted for four hours. The interviewee asked for my feedback stating that 'he learned from our talk' and asked 'to put him in contact with my supervisor for future cooperation', from which I concluded 'that my field work has not been seen as 'disturbance' but rather as source for knowledge' (Flick, 2009: 231).

2003, towards the adoption of the neoliberal policies whereby the NGOs had been expected to play a role in social welfare. I supplemented my account by showing interviewees a book that was published at the end of 2012 by my supervisor (Dr. Rana Jawad) about the role of religion in social policy. This was very helpful for focusing the interviewees' attention on the interview topic and the name of my supervisor might have suggested that the book author was 'one of them'.

After my explanation of the phenomena of religious NGOs or FBOs, the responses from the interviewees varied. Some expressed their understanding of what I was talking about, and thanked me for sharing this information, stating at the end of the interviews, that they had learned from our talk, while others remained uncertain and maybe remained doubtful of my motivation. However, the positive response from the majority of the interviewees, for which I am grateful, made this research endeavour possible.

Most, if not all, of the interviewees confirmed that their organisations were not religious NGOs and they have nothing to do with religious or political issues clearly stating that they did not mention religion or politics in their publications. Nevertheless, they did make various references to religion and Islam. For example, some interviewees explained that they were keen to clear the name of Islam from the terrorist accusations that amounted following 11th September. Others confirmed that, although they do not accept unveiled women in their offices, and they expect their male members to grow beards, these examples do not make them religious. This confirmation of the non-religious nature of these Shi'a NGOs is not new, as other researchers in the Middle East have recognised the same issue with Islamic NGOs (Yeginoğlu, 2010). This may reflect caution regarding being labelled sectarian in the heated sectarian environment prevailing in Iraq. The interviewees also stated that their NGOs did not do politics, however, they frequently mentioned their work in elections.

I faced a number of practical difficulties while conducting the fieldwork. The culture of organising a schedule for interviews in advance proved to be difficult as most of

the interviewees preferred to arrange the interviews on the same day, so I had to make calls every morning to see whether they were prepared for an interview. Some of the interviews were with the senior managers of the MoWSA, and the MoP. These proved to be difficult as these officials often experienced last minutes changes to their agendas. The difficulty in organising meetings in advance in Baghdad can be attributed to the security situation, in particular, that existing from December 2012 onwards. Moreover, as a woman it was better not to stay out after 4:00pm in winter because of the security problems and this applied during my second visit from January to April 2013. One reason why I preferred not to use participant observation was the complexity of the overall situation in the country and thus had to rely on the interviews with people from different levels in the various organisations. As a researcher I had to make sure not to raise participants' expectations. I was seen by some as an insider and was asked by one of these NGOs to be interviewed on TV, talking about their activities, and on another occasion, I was asked to organize a joint meeting with my university. This could be seen by other participants as recruiting the researcher to a specific NGO cause and had to be handled sensitively, given the highly heated political context in Iraq, even within the Shi'a context.

3.6 Data collection

The data collection was guided by the thesis research questions and was in line with the list of questions I outlined on the topic sheets. The research themes were, to some extent, informed by the literature review (Lewin and Somekh 2011). The interviews were mainly conducted in Arabic with the coding and translation of the coding in English. More than once, the interviewees asked whether they could see the list of questions in advance prior to our interviews, which I provided in order to build a comfortable atmosphere and to ease any concerns, although I explained that other questions could arise throughout the interview (Kumar, 2011). The data was collected in natural settings (Creswell, 2009) e.g. their organisations' offices. On some occasions at the participants' request other public places were used and for others, I visited the places where they had their activities running. The interviews

were carried out into two stages; the first stage in October, November and December 2011. The focus of the first stage was a wide range of organisations, religious and non-religious, in the central state of Iraq and the Kurdistan region. The second round of interviews was adjusted to concentrate on the Shi'a NGOs, the central state institutions as well as the international organisations based in the capital city, Baghdad. This second stage took place in February, March and April 2013.

The total number of interviews was 30 and appendix (2) shows the list of the interviews. I sent the transcribed interviews, as the interviewees requested, for final approval to two of them for a final check and one of them sent it back with nearly no corrections. Most of the interviews were audiotape recorded. Once the answers being gained during the interviews produced no new issues or only repeated issues which had already been mentioned, i.e. saturation (Manson, 2010), I wound up the interviewing phase.

The second source of data was extracted from documents. This source has its strengths and limitations, its main strength being that it enabled me to access information at a convenient time. Nevertheless, the limitations are that information may be protected and unavailable for public access, or materials may be incomplete, and documents may not be authentic or accurate (Creswell, 2009:180). Understandably, there is a very limited literature that addresses these organisations in Iraq with the key documents used for this research being national strategic plans, the constitution, publications from NGOs, and some governmental and international organisations' reports. Some data were also gathered from organisations' websites and correspondence with the academics interested in different aspects of state politics and economy.

Although there was a limited number of documents related to the work of the organisations available in print, some could be accessed through their websites. However, al-Mehrab had recently changed the format and the organisation of their website and materials I accessed through the old website, appear unavailable on

the new one. However, al-Mehrab's English website⁹ is much clearer than the Arabic one and carries a different name. This NGO is registered under the English name: Al-Hakim Foundation, whilst its publications in Arabic still carry the name of al-Mehrab. The publications of these various organisations take the form of pamphlets, newsletters and small publications which have provided me with supplementary resources to explain the objectives of these organisations. In fact, the documents were helpful in providing some information regarding their activities and the motivations underpinning their work.

3.7 Data analysis

The data analysis is a decisive stage when conducting research and for this study the analysis was carried out in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To this end, an inductive thematic network was constructed for the purpose of analysing the data. Attride-Stirling defines thematic networks as a "tool in analysis...to take the researcher deeper into the meaning of the texts" (2001: 93) and this form of analysis provides "a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data," (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78).

The process of thematic analysis started with an informal first stage of data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006:11) while undertaking the fieldwork. This was followed by a second informal stage when I transcribed the interviews during which I became more aware of the important themes that were touched upon by the participants. The formal stages of thematic analysis started when the coding for themes was applied to the written transcripts. The coding is important "to open up meaning" (Richards, 2009:103) and to identify features that are important when trying to understand the experience of the participants in a meaningful way (Boyatzis, 1998).

⁹ Al-Mehrab foundation uses another name for the English website, and it is registered in the UN as al-Hakim Foundations. The website is: <http://www.alhakimfd.org>, the Arabic name on the website reads: the Martyr of al-Mehrab Foundation. There is no specific website in Arabic for al-Mehrab, it has a section of the larger website which is: <http://www.belagh.com>. This website covers all the civil and activities of both ISCI and al-Mehrab.

The coding was data driven and started with this first step of immersion in the data to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006) followed by the second step of coding.

The third step involved sorting about 197 codes across 30 interviews, each of which tagged between 2- 40 extracts, all of which were points explained by the interviewees. These have formed the basic themes and are divided into five categories, each concerned with a question of: what; why; how; who; where; and when. The first three of these categories form the main focus of the analysis with the last two offering supplementary information. The question of what activities these NGOs carry out and what are the motivations of their social activities, in other words, the why question, have a list of codes. Each list of codes represents a number of extracts forming basic themes. This formed the fourth step of coding which entails bringing together and coalescing different views and ideas of the participants within a refined thematic structure. At this point in the process, the interpretation of data has begun.

I started to classify my basic themes by comparing and combining their ideas, and in this way, the organising themes emerged and this formed the fifth stage. These organising themes work as middle-order themes that organize the basic ones into clusters of similar issues, for they are “clusters of signification that summarizes the principal assumptions of a group of basic themes” (Attride- Stirling, 2001: 389). Going further in the analysis requires that the researcher looks at the links, contradictions, similarities, and investigates the meaning of organizing themes, by drawing on the extant knowledge gained from previous studies (ibid) and in this case, experience of religious–political NGOs. As a result of this process, my global themes started to emerge as the main issues that concern these NGOs. The global themes show the outcomes of the thematic analysis of the data starting from the coding and ending with the units of analysis. Table (1) below demonstrates the last three stages starting with the basic themes moving towards organising themes, and finally, reaching the global themes.

Table (1) The last three stages of coding

Code and basic themes	Issues discussed	Organising Themes	Global themes
1) Social service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Helping the poor widows and orphans - Poverty - Moral - Good society - Family and social ties - Mercy - Social system - Traditions - In cash, in kind transfer to widows and orphans - Religious responsibility - Filling the state gap - Thawab and Ajr (Divine rewards: God satisfaction i.e. heaven afterlife) - State responsibility - Missionary role - Help from the Gulf countries - Khums distribution for Shi'a - The reputation of al-Marja'iyya family - Saddaqa - The economic impact of provision - The psychological impact on the widows - The procedures - Collective wedding ceremonies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding the family - Poverty as a cause for a society destruction - Link between family and society - Islam and family - Islam and social order - Helping the poor is religious duty imposed on all - The benefits of religious donations for all - The temporary intervention of the Shi'a organisations in welfare - Welfare role and missionary role - The state responsibility in welfare provision - Staff religious motivation - Transfer religious money for welfare provision - The criteria for Khums provision - The procedures and the criteria for the provision - The psychological impact of the social welfare - Collective wedding ceremony is a Religious permeated programme - The important of marriage in Islam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect family to protect the society - Welfare - intervention is a religious duty - State responsibility towards the society - Provision mostly for the one's community - The provision is determined sometimes through connections. - The multidimensional influence of the social assistance provisions, religious and political. 	<p>Social Assistance to protect the Muslim society through protecting the family</p>
2) Education and awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach what you learned - Order the right, 	<p>The importance of Religious duty or (Takleef)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To organise human relations with each other 	

<p>prevent the wrong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching the way of life - Teaching from an early age - Family safeguarding - Human building - Self building - Bring people closer to God - The importance of empathy - To show how Islam is different - The love of others - Assuming responsibility on others - Cultural building - Brining humans closer to God - Disseminating the teaching of Ahl-al-Bayt - Shi'a rituals - Protecting the individuals from the wrong doings - Help for those without male breadwinners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The importance of moral education - Enhancing the human-God- relationship - Education for religious purpose - To take religion in every aspect in life - The importance of teaching children their religion - Equipping children with skills and knowledge, and responding to their needs - Warning them from the influences of the Western culture - Definition of child - Teaching children, their families, and informing the wider society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education for building religious character of the child - Independent and autonomous thinking is compromised - Education is to create a new generation of Muslim Shi'a to lead the state and society - Religious education is shaping the features of the society and the state - The Shi'a rituals are to consolidate the Shi'a community - Informing the individual behaviour to inform the society norm in line with Islam 	<p>Creating Sacred community, and Islamic society from below</p>
<p>3) Political activism and mobilising people for elections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The elections - The constitution - The Fatwa - Loyalty - Voting - al-Marja'iyya - Taqlid, emulation - Good society - Right choice - Religious duty - To protect the Shia - To avoid the return of the previous regime - Wide elections campaigns - Moharram - Karbala - The role of Zainab and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilisation people for the elections, and vote for the new constitution - Follow the religious Fatwa of the Marja - Enhancing the Shi'a to relations to Ahl-al-Bayt - Knowing the righteous way of life - The link between social welfare and loyalty - The Shi'a NGOs and political party relation - The role of the preachers in political mobilisation - The legitimacy of mobilising service users for the elections - Informing Muslim's political behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turning Shi'a organisations to Social bases for mobilisation - The link between providing social welfare services and asking for political loyalty exists if not for political reason, for religious goals - Shi'a NGOs to consolidate the Revival of Shia - Strengthening the Shi'a- Marja'iyya loyalty; - Creating new state- citizen 	<p>Empowering the New Shi'a state.</p>

Fatima - Democracy - Educating of children.	- To protect the Shi'a from their enemy - Islam role and the state - Manufacturing a new generation for the state and society - State- NGOs partnership - The importance of preparing the future generation to lead the state and society.	relations, through disciplining the state and citizen - Creating new generation to lead the future state and society.	
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In the above discussion, I have presented the ontology, the epistemology, the methodology of the thesis, and the research method in collecting and analysing data. Table 2 shows a summary of the research design.

Table 2 - The research design

The research ontology	Constructivist
The research epistemology	Interpretivist
The research methodology	Inductive interpretive
The research method	Informants' interviews
The research data analyses	Thematic analysis

3.8 The trustworthiness of the research

It is important to highlight the procedures taken in order to confirm the trustworthiness of the research, in terms of ensuring that a clear "picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented" (Shenton, 2004; 64). For interpretive research the trustworthiness and credibility are significant whilst under a positive approach measurements of "validity, reliability, objectivity, precision, and generalizability" (Tuli, 2010: 101), are important. Taking steps to addressing the question of how to be "certain that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (ibid) and establish trust in a research study,

for, trustworthiness is “based on a sound rationale that justifies the use of chosen methodology and the processes involved in data collection and analysis” (ibid).

The trustworthiness of this research is ensured on the following grounds. First, the method used for this research for collecting data is commonly used as a qualitative method (Shenton, 2004; 64), that is, informant interviews were carried out in the appropriate social setting, with all necessary procedures observed to conduct scientific qualitative research. Second, a researcher’s familiarity with the participants, according to Shenton (2004), is important when conducting scientific research. As a researcher, I was familiar with both the Shi’a traditions and with the NGO world, which enabled me to understand and reflect on the issues raised by these NGOs’ representatives. Moreover, the literature about Islamic NGOs has provided me with a clear context regarding what might be going on in this type of NGO.

Next, triangulation was achieved through individually interviewing different people in one organisation, and in different settings and by holding group interviews. It is culturally acceptable that some of the interviewees allowed others colleagues or even friends to attend their interviews. This research has captured a number of interviews with a wide range of bodies: governmental and non governmental, local and international, religious and secular, Islamic Sunni, and Islamic Shi’a. This has provided what Dervin calls a “circling reality” which means “the necessity of obtaining a variety of perspectives in order to get a better, more stable view of ‘reality’ based on a wide spectrum of observations from a wide base of points in time-space” (Dervin, 1983 cited in Shenton, 2004:66). This was made possible through the iterative questioning about some points raised by the interviewees. This involved iterating the topic and bringing forward statements to make sure that I gained the right meaning from the interviewee by repeating or rephrasing what I had understood from the answers. Moreover, the study was carried out in its specific socio-political context which is fundamental in understanding the experience of the NGOs under study.

Fourth, and lastly, peer reviews have been sought to inform the analysis and methodology of conducting this research. I have submitted a brief of this thesis to three public gatherings: a seminar and a conference for PhD students in Bath, in May 2012, June 2012 respectively; and in a workshop in Morocco in February 2014. My work will be presented in the forthcoming conference held at the University of Bath in November 2014. Moreover, throughout this chapter, an audit trail is presented which means that the reader can “trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described” (Shenton, 2004: 72). This account delineates the boundaries of the groups under discussion, in terms of their formations, links, geographical areas, their class positioning, numbers of organisations, as well as the number of interviews, and the time periods of the interview fieldwork stages wherein the data was collected.

3.9 Ethical considerations for conducting the research

Before the empirical work, ethical approval was obtained from the university. Once the scene was set for interviews, I explained my ethical commitments to the participants, verbally and in writing. For this, a written statement in Arabic was provided to the interviewees confirming that all information provided would not be misused or mishandled, and that anonymity of participants was guaranteed. During the course of the fieldwork some explained that they would not mind if their names were revealed, however, I chose not to reveal these. I confirmed that the confidential collected data would be stored in secured computerized systems and would not be shared with any agencies (Biber and Leavy, 2006:109). I explained the interviewee’s right to withdraw at any time (Shenton, 2004), and they had the option to refuse audio recordings of all or any part of the interview. In fact, I was asked more than once to switch off the recorder and then asked to start it again later. I provided a one page information sheet in English and Arabic which clarified the research subject (see Appendices 3 and 4).

I distributed a consent form in Arabic for the interviewees to read and sign when they agreed to take part the interview. Some signed it and others preferred to give their agreement verbally.

In a number of my interviews with some Shi'a NGOs I found it was better to wear Hijab and to take off my shoes before I entered their offices, as others did. I made sure that I did not extend my hand to male interviewees to shake their hand, unless they initiated this, so as not cause any embarrassment. On some occasions the male interviewees made sure that the door was left open to their offices throughout the interviews. The interviewees with female members were freer and even relaxed by comparison. One thing I could not manage well was the issue of eye contact. Some of the interviewees at the beginning of our conversations avoided making eye contact, as a sign of respect, however, naturally I made contact when listening and writing down their comments. After a while, the conversation went on smoothly with eye contact between both parties.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described my research journey from its outset in terms of its ontological approach, epistemological assumptions, the research methodology, as well as the collecting and analysing of the data, explaining access and demonstrating my role as insider and outsider and I have introduced briefly the Shi'a NGOs. In addition, in this chapter I have outlined the ethical matters which I had to take into consideration whilst conducting this research. In subsequent chapters the empirical research is presented with the focus being on the NGOs' social provision and its intended influence. However, before considering the collected evidence, the following chapter gives an overview of the setting for the study, that is, the country of Iraq.

Part 2

Chapter 4: Iraq, a country profile

4.1 Introduction

To analyse the multipronged intended influences of the Shi'a NGOs in Iraq, it is important to situate the emergence of these organisations in the post war socio-political environment, when a new era of the revival of the Shi'a began. Introducing this background is important for understanding their roles in terms of the motivations, operations, and the influence they hope to make on the society. This chapter includes a presentation of the demographic structure of Iraqi society, the new political settlement in Iraq after the war and the political economy of the country. Regarding the lattermost, the political and economic changes in line with neoliberal policies are discussed, thereby shedding light on the relevant social policies and context in relation to the emergence of the focal NGOs in Iraq. Data generated from the fieldwork involving interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs (MoWSA) and the Ministry of Planning (MoP), NGOs, both religious and non-religious and from international organisations, are drawn upon to explain the recent developments of interest. In addition, the literature pertaining to the socio-political situation in the country is engaged with to the same end. This chapter is organised as follows: Section 4.2 introduces the demographic structure of Iraqi society, whilst section 4.3 explains the post war political settlement and section 4.4 discusses the evolution of the political economy of the country. Section 4.5 covers post war state social policies, then the chapter concludes.

4.2 The demographic structure of the country

Frank Gunter, the author of the Political Economy of Iraq, stated that "there is no shortage of data on Iraq...the problem is that the available data is often inconsistent" (2013: 6). The population of Iraq is unknown as there has been no

census since 1997. According to Gunter, the estimated population is approximately 31 million covering an area of 433,970 km (Metz, 2004). Interviewees from the Ministry of Planning (MoP) attributed the reluctance to conduct a national census to political reasons in that knowing the geographic distribution of the population would have political and economic implications¹⁰. The nation has 18 governorates, 15 being administrated by the central state, and three by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). That is, Iraq is a federal state, but Kurdistan is the only part of the federation separate from the central state, having had its own parliament and government in the northern part of Iraq since 1991¹¹. The population of Iraqi Kurdistan is estimated to be 5.3 million (Kurdistan Review, 2013). Erbil is the capital city of Kurdistan region, whilst the status of Kirkuk, the biggest oil rich city in northern Iraq, populated by Kurdish, Arabic and Turkoman speaking populations, remains strongly contested, in particular, by the Kurds¹². The Arabic speaking people, mainly in the middle and southern parts of Iraq, represent 75% - 80% of the population, Kurdish speakers totalling 15%-20% are largely based in the north. Turkoman and others (approximately 5% in total) are mainly based in Kirkuk city and the southern Kurdistan region. The new constitution considers both Arabic and Kurdish as the official languages of the state. Other languages, such as Turkoman (Turkish dialect), Assyrian and Armenian are permitted to be taught in their respective communities. The main religion is Islam, comprising 97% of the population (Shia represent between 60% and 65% and Sunni between 32% and 37%), with Christian and others, thus only constituting 3% of the total. The Arab Shi'a are mainly concentrated in the south and middle of the country, whilst the Sunnis are predominantly located in the centre and the west. However, this division

10 The census issue became politicised by the ruling political parties after 2003 (Orsam Report, 2012:19). The census and demographic distribution could effect the political balance of power, in particular, in Kirkuk as there has been ongoing political struggle between Arab and Kurdish political parties over its administration. Gunter has pointed out that if the census took place and shows that Kirkuk has majority Kurdish speaking population, then "this would strengthen the movement to have Kirkuk join the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)" (Gunter, 2013: 9).

¹¹ Iraq was obliged to accept resolution number 688 issued on April 3, 1991, which "demanded that Iraq cease repression of its population....against Kurds in the north and Shi'ite Muslims in the south" (Prados. 2002:3).

¹² Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution states that a referendum will be held in this city to allow its inhabitants to determine their own status (Bet- Shlimon, 2012:914), regarding whether to be a part of the Iraqi central government, or a Kurdistan Region, or to have a federal state. This was supposed to take place in December 2007 and still has yet to do so (September 2014).

based on religion and ethnicity “conceals more than it reveals” (Gunter, 2013: 68) as each group is not homogenous, being divided according to: economic class, political views, level of education, religion or secularity, tribal affiliation¹³ or patriotic preferences.

4.3 The post war new political settlement

The post war era has witnessed a new political setting that was unseen since the establishment of Iraq as a state in 1921. This new political system is based on the notion of sharing powers between sectarian and ethnic groups, including the Shi’a, Sunni, Kurds as well as others. This policy began with de-Bath’ification of the state, which led to the laying off of 30,000 Ba’thists, on top of 500,000 army soldiers, who were dismissed as a result the dissolving of the Iraqi army (Yousif, 2006: 497). This process was announced in the first order issued by Paul Bremer in 2003, which was aimed at stripping the remnants of the previous regime of political power, i.e. disbanding “what was left of the Saddam – era” (Nasr, 2006:198). This intensified the conflict between the Shi’a newly emerged political groups, and those from the Sunni sect, as this was also perceived by the latter as a policy of “de-Sunnification” (ibid). The project was underpinned by the notion that each sect would have a share in the state, in terms of membership of parliament and the ministries. Called al-Mohassassa, it was decreed that the size of ‘shares’ of these posts would be based on the proportion of each sectarian and ethnic population across the nation (Ismael and Fuller, 2008). Underlying this unequal division of power was the goal that it “gives each community a share of power and prestige to promote cooperation and unity” (Katzman, 2014:1). Nevertheless, the policy in reality has “strengthened the sectarian loyalties by making sectarian affiliation synonymous with representation” (Gunter, 2013: 13), and it seems also to have paved the way for the sectarian conflict that eventually resulted in military confrontation.

¹³ Within tribes there are sectarian divisions because “of the five major tribes of Iraq, three have both Shi’a and Sunni branches” (Gunter, 2013: 68).

In practical terms, Al-Mohassassa, initiated by the USA administration in Iraq led to the establishment of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)¹⁴ that ruled the country from May 11, 2003 (Halchin, 2004:3). The CPA subsequently formed the Interim Governing Council (IGC) July 13th 2004, consisting of 25 members divided on sectarian and ethnic grounds: “13 from the Shi’a, 5 from the Sunni, and the rest from the Kurds and Assyrians” (Haddad, 2010). The CPA proposed moving from the interim government to an elected national government through a caucus system that would consist of "notables", important personnel from each province of Iraq, who would appoint an assembly that would select a government and write the constitution. However this proposal was rejected by the higher Marja’iyya, al-Sistani, who called for a general election so as to allow every man and woman the opportunity to vote in the elections, and also to vote for a new constitution to be written by Iraqi hands. The confrontation between the CPA and the al-Marja’iyya did not last long and al-Sistani’s vision of holding a general election soon became the overriding wish of the Iraqi people, especially the Shi’a. This was remarkable given that al-Sistani belongs to a Shi’a religious trend that believes that clergymen should not intervene in politics of the state and should restrict its involvement to advising what is the best for the Ummah. Despite this, a Fatwa, or religious order, was issued by al-Sistani on 20th April 2003 (Visser, 2006: 10). Regarding which, he explained to his followers or emulators his view that the CPA’s intention to carry out elections through caucuses lacked legitimacy. According to Visser, al-Sistani’s response was:

“All of a sudden...acute and crisp. ‘Those authorities’ he remarked, ‘have no mandate to appoint the members of the assembly charged with writing the constitution’. He then went on to sketch out the ideal procedure as he saw it: a general election in which every Iraqi would vote for representatives to a constituent assembly, followed by a general referendum over the proposed constitution. Sistani added that ‘all believers’ ought to insist on this

¹⁴ The Coalition Provisional Authorities (CPA) was established by the USA on May 2003 to restore security, stability and to facilitate economic recovery. It was “closely aligned with the department of Defence [USA] and the USA Agency for International Development (USAID)”. The CPA ended its mission in June 2004 (Halchin, 2004; Pina, 2006).

procedure – thereby making it clear that not only was he now entering the political scene, but was actually drawing up political imperatives for his followers (Visser, 2006: 11)

Given al-Sistani's importance as the higher Marja'iyya for the Shi'a the CPA has to submit to his will after 100,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Baghdad city supporting his plan (Dodge, 2005:716). That is, his influence was so great that the USA backed down from its initial position and Iraqi politicians as well as the Shi'a NGOs fell in behind him. An interviewee close to al-Sistani this as follows:

SM ND2: The USA attempted to organise the situation in Iraq by signing an agreement between Paul Bremer and al-Talabani¹⁵ calling for caucuses, which was an alternative to a general election. al-Marja'iyya strongly rejected this agreement and al-Sistani issued a fatwa, known as the Fatwa of July¹⁶. This took everyone by surprise, since the timetable was so tight, and the security situation was not good. al-Sistani did not budge, he called on his Wokala (trustees, agents) asking them to advocate and educate the public for this fatwa in their areas. al-Syad [the Master, or the Marja, al-Sistani] insisted on his position and all submitted to his will.

al-Sistani's proposal was immediately translated into a plan of action and the first election was held on 30th January to establish the Transitional National Association (TNA), which was charged with the writing of the constitution before the national general elections. The TNA was dominated by Shi'a in the absence of the Sunni and began drafting the constitution in May 2005. In this draft, Islam was affirmed to have a superior position in the state, with it being the main source of all laws (Schmidt, 2008) and no law was to contradict the law of Islam. Accordingly, SCIRI as well as the other Shi'a parties made a commitment to legalise and institutionalise

¹⁵ Paul Bremer was in charge of the CPA and al-Talabani, a member of the Iraqi governing council, became the first president of Iraq in 2005.

¹⁶ The Fatwa was issued on 26 June 2003 (Feldman, 2005).

Shari'a Law (Cole, 2007:10). The constitution was put to a nationwide referendum on October 15, 2005 and approved by the majority of those who voted¹⁷.

The second step in al-Sistani's proposed process was the elections to the legislative council, which were planned for mid December 2005 and this was supported by the Sunni political parties. Nevertheless, the Shi'a political parties, once again, won the elections with a majority of 128 of the 275 seats, representing 47% of the total, while the Kurdish alliance won 53 seats, representing 19%, and the Sunni parties including secular groups won 44 seats, representing 16%, with the Kurdish Islamist; Iraqi National List gaining 25 seats representing 9%; Independent Sadrist; Turkmen; and Christian won 14 seats representing 5%, and the Sunni Arab list, ostensibly non-sectarian, al-Hiwar won 11 seats representing 4%. Table (2) provides the results of these elections. The subsequent distribution of the ministerial posts was organised in line with number of seats in parliament.

The main feature that characterised the first and second election campaigns is that there was no clear economic, social, or even political programme of any sort. Instead of introducing such programmes, the focus of the Shi'a political parties, as a powerful election propaganda tool, was on their previous religious oppression. As Diamond et al explain:

“we do not have issue-based elections, we have identity based elections... there are no platforms, there are no white papers, there are no programmes for winning office, nor agendas, that give voters a sense of what to expect from candidates or from groups if voted into office” (Diamond et al, 2009:55).

17 The vote for the constitution was: 78.6% in favour and 21.4% against. This was despite the “Sunni provinces of Anbar and Salahuddin producing a 97% and 82% “no” votes, respectively and the mostly Sunni Nineveh province voting 55% “no”, whereas Diyala, believed to be mostly Sunni, had a 51% “yes” vote. However, in Kurdistan and the other cities populated by Shi'a, the constitution was approved. (Katzman, 2006:4)

Despite the democratic elections and the Mohassassa, both arrangements did not solve the sectarian conflict. Before 2003, the Shi'a political parties espoused that "the ruling Sunni elite exploited the nation's oil wealth, dominated the armed forces ... discriminated against Shi'ites at the political level and within government service, and favoured development of Sunni areas in terms of housing, education, social services, the building of mosques, and many other areas" (Khazai and Cordesman, 2013:7). The Sunni, having lost power, began to claim that the Shia were puppets to their "Iranian masters...want absolute power in Iraq, and that all Sunnis are to be rendered powerless" (One Hundred Twelfth Congress, Second Session, April 30, 2012). The Shi'a on their part, having suffered decades of political oppression, believed that "the Sunnis want to take back control and return a dictator to power who will once again marginalize the Shia" (ibid: 2). Data from both the fieldwork and the literature provide evidence to support Khazai and Cordesman's (2013) contention that: "the emergence of a Shi'ite dominated central government since 2010 has tended to alienate many Arab Sunnis" (P9).

Although the tension between the Shi'a Arabs and Kurds did not lead to violence, throughout the post-war period there has been ongoing tension in regard to oil distribution and the administration of Kirkuk. The Sunni, on the other hand, have no access to oil fields that are available to both the Shi'a and the Kurds. In fact, the Shi'a whose oil reserves are concentrated in the south, have "about 60 percent of the reserves and the north of the country with 17 percent of reserves" (International Monetary Fund Country Report No. 13/218, July 2013) is under the control of the Kurds. This situation has seriously economically disadvantaged the Sunnis and their representatives in parliament and has further strengthened the sectarian divide. As a result of the new political reality, it has become nigh on impossible to come to a consensus on a wide range of economic, political and social issues.

The period between the first national elections in 2005 and the second in 2010 witnessed an escalation in violence that brought the country to the edge of civil

war¹⁸, in particular after the bombing of the two Shi'a shrines in 2006 where the tenth and the eleventh Imams of the Shi'a were buried in the ninth century¹⁹ in Samara, North Baghdad. In March 2010, the second election took place to fill 310 seats and was won by a secular block, which consisted of a coalition of a mixture of political parties and individuals from secular, Sunni, Shia and Kurdish backgrounds. However, the election result was not recognised by the previous Shi'a government, claiming that there were irregularities²⁰ and consequently power remained in the hands of the Shia parties up until the April 2014 elections²¹.

By the time of the 2014 elections, the government had so far managed to survive political and social unrest that was exacerbated following months of demonstrations by the Sunnis starting in December 2012. These demonstrations raised socio-political demands inspired by the revolutions of the Arab spring. The Sunni political parties, having witnessed the victories of Islamic Sunni parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and other Arab speaking countries, entered a new stage of political negotiation with the Iraqi government that ended in military confrontation. Thus, when the country approached the elections of 2014, the struggle was reaching its peak. The Institute for the Study of War issued a report about the elections in Iraq noting:

Iraq's 2014 national elections are taking place at a difficult time. The country is at a crossroads, presented with the possibility of widely different futures. Deteriorating security conditions frame political thought in ways that harken back to Iraq's first national elections in 2005. The Iraqi state does not hold control of territory in some of Iraq's key political provinces, such as Anbar,

¹⁸ The sectarian violence that followed the formation of first government resulted in "3,159 deaths, in July 2006 only" (Haddad, 2013:115). The casualties of the 2006-2007 reached 29,296 and 25,813 respectively including the US forces (Iraqi Body Account) <https://www.iraqbodycount.org>.

¹⁹ The Tenth Imam is Imam Al-Hadi who was died in 827- 828 at the age of 42 in Samara where his shrine is to this day, and also his son Imam Hasan al-askar was buried in 874 in the same place (Imam Muhammad Shirazi- Fountain books, 2008:90-92)

²⁰ The accusations of corruption in the election process was repeatedly mentioned in all the elections (Derby and Cordesman, 2010:3)

²¹ In 2009, Al-Malki, the prime minister and the leader of al-Dawa party announced in his meeting with group of tribal leaders that "we will not give it away [the power]" in Arabic 'Ma-Nintiha'; this provoked wide reactions and some websites and face book pages under the name Ma-Nintiha were opened condemning this statement.

Ninewa [Mousil], and Diyala. The disenfranchisement of Iraq's Arab Sunnis; the rising threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS); and the activation of Ba'athist groups collectively discourage electoral participation...

Iraqi Security Forces are not able to contain the increasing violence. Baghdad, the capital, is under a growing threat of ISIS and Iraqi insurgent groups that seek to undermine the political process. Security and local identity are dominant themes in the 2014 elections. This is a stark contrast to Iraq's 2010 elections, which primarily involved strategies of ethno-sectarian unity. Pre-election coalitions in 2014 have re-crystallized around primary stakeholders within the main Iraqi Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish blocs, generating competition rather than unity" (Ali, 2014: 4).

A decade after the Iraq war, no political agreement has been arrived at regarding either the democratic process or power sharing. The country is still going through "different layers of tensions between the Shi'a-Sunni which was fuelled by de-Ba'athification policy that polarized Iraqi politics and contributed to severe instability in the Iraqi military and government not just in the first flush of regime change, but extending as far as the parliamentary elections" (Sissons and Al-Saiedi, 2013: 1). These ongoing conflicts involve Arabs versus Kurds, Shi'a versus Sunni and that relating to the role of Islam in the state. What now seems to be the key tension is that between the Shi'a political parties and Sunni groups, whereby the latter have turned to violence in the belief that they have been marginalised by the actions of the former. The two sects Shi'a and Sunni's political and military actions have "fuelled a nationwide surge in ethnic violence that has contributed to a major spike in sectarian violence across Iraq, bringing about political instability, and significant security challenges" (ibid), which has limited "the ability to reach key compromises and decisions on the patterns of governance and development (Sissons and Al-Saiedi, 2013:5). This conflict gained extra fuel following the uprising in Syria. That is, the Sunni Militia that began fighting in Syria extended their operations to Iraq in 2011, where they have been supported by the Islamic Sunni tribes and the remnants of the Ba'th party members, who as mentioned above are also Sunnis. In 2013, these groups killed nearly 9,000 people and wrested control in at least three

cities as well as taking over some land pockets near Baghdad (Katzman, 2014). However, the situation has now escalated much further, for since June 2014, ISIS has stripped three cities, including Mosul, from the control of Iraqi government, leaving thousands of Shi'a, Sunnis, Christian and, Yazadis either killed or having fled (Sekulow et al, 2014: 11).

4.4 The post war political economy

Iraq as a state was established in 1921 following the British occupation in 1917-1919, which took control from the Ottoman Empire (Katzman, 2009:1). The newly formed state covered its costs aided by the British government in the 1920s and 1930s (Dodge, 2005: 705- 721) and Iraq became fully independent in 1932. Following the discovery of oil in the 1920s (Kane, 2010: 7), this became the main source of it's Gross Domestic Production (GDP) and with high dependence on this resource the nation became a rentier state. Rentier states are defined as countries that "receive on a regular basis substantial amount of external rent....paid by foreign individuals.. or governments of a given country" (Mahdavy, 1970: 428) . In Iraq, the oil represents external rent for the country, i.e. it is the main source of the state's revenue. The Ba'th party seized power in 1968, driven by its Arab nationalist socialist ideology. It set to work exploiting the natural and human resources for the nation's economic development (Ozlu, 2006), with the aim of enhancing the regime's political legitimacy. In particular, the regime played a key role in universal social welfare provision funded by oil revenues.

Economically, the regime's policy was characterised by its focus on establishing a centralised command economy founded on industry and infrastructural development (Al-Khafaji, 2000). In 1980, nearly 100% of school-aged children were enrolled in primary school (Al-Samaraai,, 2012) and female attendance in primary schools rose from 34% to 95% between 1970 and 1980 (Sanford, 2003). The oil revenue had enabled the regime leaders to allocate "considerable resources both for state building and for consolidating their own positions" (Joseph, 1991:178). Politically, the Ba'th party's economic development and welfare policy led to a high

degree of political tension between it and its political competitors:, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)²², which had been prominent since the 1958 revolution (Yamamoto, 2008), the Islamists who were living their golden age between 1963 and 1968 ²³ (Marr, 2004 cited in Yamamoto, 2008: 243) and the Kurdish parties. In 1977, the Ba'athists started a nationwide campaign of Ba'athification, in particular for all students in secondary to higher education²⁴.

In February 1979, the revolution in Iran echoed strongly across Iraq at both state and societal levels. That is, the Shia political groups attempted to follow Iran's example by organising a Shia uprising in Baghdad on the 12th June 1979 (Al-Khursan, 1999). This was exposed and thus, had to be aborted before it took place. The fear that Islamic revolution would be replicated in Iraq led Western governments to support the hard line of the Ba'ath party as represented by Saddam Hussein in taking control of the government and ousting the then president Al-Bakir (Al Khursan, 1999:302). On 16th July 1979, Saddam Hussein came to power and started his presidency by executing the leading members of his own party who opposed his extreme policies against the Shi'a. In August, only a few weeks after seizing power, he turned against the Shi'a, assassinating Mohammad Baqir Al-Sadr, the prominent Marja'iyya²⁵ of the Shi'a world wide for his public support of the Iranian revolution. The Ba'ath regime continued in power for 35 years of dictatorship; launched an internal war against the Kurdish population in the northern part of Iraq in 1973, declared war against Iran that lasted from 1980 to 1988 and invaded Kuwait in 1990. This last action led to war being waged against

²² The Ba'ath party invited the Iraqi Communist party (ICP) to occupy two nominal ministerial positions in 1972, but in 1977 the ICP was severely attacked (Al-Khursan, 2001:145).

²³ In this period, the Islami Da'wa party, following the attacks of the Ba'ath Party against the communists in 1963, was the only Islamic Shi'a party that "made an effort to participate in Iraqi politics through elections if possible, established labour unions in order support the party in elections" (Yamamoto, 2008:247).

²⁴ There is a substantial literature that discusses the de-Ba'athification policy in Iraq adopted by CPA (Al-Saiedi,2013; Ghanim, 2011; Porch, 2003;; Katzman, 2014). However, there is scant literature on the process of Ba'athification . My personal experience of its meaning was the enforcing of Iraqi citizens, regardless of their religious sect, nationality, political affiliation, to join the Ba'ath party and implement party orders. Those who signed up for membership were not allowed to defect to another party or other political groups and in fact, doing so was punishable by death. Thousands of students in both secondary schools and universities were expelled from their education as a result of their refusal to join the party.

²⁵ Al-Marjaia is the highest religious establishment in the Shia sect.

Iraq by the US and its allies in 1991, which resulted in humiliating defeat for its army. Subsequently, an uprising took place in the southern part of Iraq, which the media saw as a Shi'a uprising, but this was severely crushed by the regime. Following which, Saddam continued his repression of the Shi'a until the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Khazai and Cordesman, 2013:7). After the war, a new era began, one in which new arrangements regarding state-society relations were installed (Zubaida, 2005; Jabar, 2003; Tripp, 2007).

The post war political change involved a rapid transition of the Iraqi economy from being centralised to a free market type. Regarding which, the CPA declared at the first meeting in Jordan that the main objective of its mission was to liberalise Iraq's economy (Yousif, 2006:23) and set out a programme of reforms of privatisation and marketisation that were to be swiftly implemented (Abboud, 2008:426). This attempt at liberalisation was thwarted by two phenomena: the civil war that took place in 2006-2007, and serious resistance to privatisation from the Iraqi government (Gunter, 2013). Thus, the public sector continues to have a key role in economic and social welfare matters. Iraq, as a rentier state, continues to rely heavily on "petroleum exports that provide some 95% of its government revenue" (Khazai and Cordesman, 2013). This has led the Iraqi economy to suffer from a serious lack of economic diversity, which has left it vulnerable to oil price shocks and the ongoing focus on oil has meant other sectors, such as manufacturing industry, agriculture and services have largely been neglected. 70% of the state budget is allocated to its operations, and only 30% is earmarked for investment.

Following this discussion on the history of the political economy, the focus is directed now towards understanding how the Shi'a NGOs appeared in the socioeconomic context and where they fit on the political map of the country. However, a few words about the state social policies might be useful for understand the upcoming discussion about the role of these organisation in Iraq in terms of their involvement in development, advocacy, and/or the democratic process.

4.5 Post war state social policies

The oil revenue has enabled the state, according to De Freitas and Johnson (2012: 11) to have a “rather unique public welfare system; while other countries in the MENA region spend an average of 3.6% of GDP on public social safety nets, Iraq spent 8.8% of their GDP on social safety nets in 2008”. In addition, since 1973 the state has implemented free education and health systems (Pina, 2006: 3; Al-Khafaji, 2000: 4). A Social Care Law, number 126, was issued in 1980 directed at those who were unable to work, such as the disabled, widows, elderly, orphans and divorced women (Ebrahim and Hussain, 2009:112).

According to the interviewees from international organisations in Iraq as well as the ministries, USAID, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNDP, ESCWA, and other UN linked organisations have worked closely with the Iraqi government to reform the previous economic and social policies towards free market and neoliberal policies; pushing back the role of the state in social welfare provision. The aim has been to increase the role of the private sector to generate economic growth and increase employment opportunities through privatisation and reducing state subsidies as well as promoting the role of NGOs as social welfare providers. Since 2005, continuous efforts have been made to reform the old welfare programmes, the state remains still largely in control of the economy. Consequently, the old policies have, in the main, continued with the economic policy still being driven by the state. The concentration of the financial and political power both in the hands of the sectarian or ethnic political parties who control access to massive oil revenues, in Gunter’s words, could lead to Iraq becoming an oligarchic capitalistic state, like other countries in the Arab Middle East whereby the power and wealth is held by a small group of families (Gunter, 2013). There continues to be adherence to the view that state power should be the main provider of welfare as an incentive for people to keep supporting the status quo with their votes. As a result, much of the proposed reform legalisation is still waiting for parliament to act, as I was told by interviewees from the MoP and MoWSA ministries. In relation to this Gunter has pointed out the following:

“within Iraq’s current coalition government, the 34 ministries are divided up among the various political parties ... some of the ministries are important because they control SOE [state owned enterprises]. These SOEs provide the ministries with large budgets and elevated status as well the capability to distribute government jobs to loyal supporters. If a ministry loses its SOE to privatisation then there will be fewer prizes –desirable ministries –to divide among coalition members and important members of the opposition” (Gunter, 2013: 169)

From the above, it seems that the role of the state is still central to the economy and the private sector is not seriously developed. Given that the role of the NGOs was considered important for development, as well as for democracy, in the following chapter I will discuss the emergence of NGOs in Iraq.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have painted a picture of the socio-political scene of Iraq pre- and post 2003, so as to provide a background prior to exploring the role of the Shi’a NGOs in detail. It has been shown that politically the country has not yet been stabilised after the sectarian violence following the overthrow of Saddam’s regime and the subsequent de-Ba’thification, which swept the Shi’a into political power and marginalised the Sunni. Economically, despite serious attempts to reform Iraq in line with neoliberalism, there has been great resistance to this strategy. This is attributed to the fact that Iraq is a country that is rich with resources, which has provided the state with considerable funds that have enabled it to enhance its political power as with the previous regime. That is, continuing control over the state enterprises has provided political parties with the wherewithal to be able to distribute incentives to their followers so as to guarantee their vote and hence, remain in power. Consequently, they have a vested interest in maintaining the primary role of the state. Moreover, the powerful public sector has worked to ensure that there is a hostile environment towards both the private sector and civil society organisations. To identify what the roles of Shi’a organisations play in terms

their social activities as well as their motivations, who they influence and who they are influenced by are investigated in depth in the following four empirical chapters.

Chapter 5: The emergence of Shi'a NGOs in Iraq

5.1 Introduction

In the literature review chapter, chapter 2, it was shown that the emergence of political Islam during the 1970s combined with the new political openness involving the adoption of democracy and neoliberal policy, form the context in which Islamic NGOs were able to function. In the chapter, it was explained that these NGOs were often utilised due to political restrictions on the work of political groups, being formed as apolitical organisations that worked to provide for those in need and also to spread the word of Islam to Muslims. It is clear from the evidence that political Islam took advantage of this new form of organisation in order to reach a wider constituency through its social welfare provision that, as explained in Chapter 2, took the form of clientelism, whereby it was distributed under the expectation that political loyalty would be granted by the receivers to the donors.

Subsequent political change, post 2003, proved to be fertile ground for Shi'a NGOs as they mushroomed in line with the political vacuum that followed the invasion and the collapse of the previous regime. The Shi'a NGOs, thus, can be seen as a phenomenon rooted in the era of the revival of the Shi'a (Nasr, 2006). To get a sense of what the Shi'a NGOs do and why are they conducting their chosen activities, it is necessary to look at two important factors: first, the historical division between the Shi'a and Sunni, which sheds light on how Shi'a NGOs differ from those of the Sunni. The second factor relates to the new opportunities that led to this new type of organisation being able to operate in a political way at different levels within the Iraqi landscape. Consequently, section 5.2 provides the historical background to the Shi'a sect; section 5.3 discusses the emergence of Shi'a NGOs as a distinct entity post 2003, while section 5.4 covers the Shi'a NGOs' sources of funding for their activities.

5.2 Who are the Shi'a?

'Shi'a' refers to *"a particular school of Islamic thought, which is based on the teachings of the Prophet and his family, and sometimes it is referred to as the "school of Ahlul Bayt"* (Al-Qazwini, 2013:1). Its adherents are supporters of Ali, Mohammad's cousin and son in law, who believe that after the death of Mohammad, he was the only legitimate Imam for ruling the Ummah. The claim is based on a statement made by Mohammad in 632 at Ghadir Khumm, in which the prophet appointed Ali as his successor²⁶ (Kelidar, 1983; Campbell, 2008). However, this pronouncement was ignored by other close associates of Mohammad who continued in their powerful positions (Sanders, 1992). They were in favour of holding a Shura, or a council, to elect his successor, which consisted of the most prominent Muslims who were close to the Prophet and this group chose to have a caliphate involving both religious and political leadership. This was seen by the supporters of Ali, or Shi'a of Ali, as being in opposition to Mohammad's will and stripping his descendents of their divine right of ruling the Ummah. This was the point at which Muslims were divided into two sects: the supporters of Ali, or the Shi'a; and the supporters of the caliphate, with the tasking themselves with following the rule of Mohammad. Under the arrangement of the latter, Ali was able to rule the Ummah as the fourth caliph until he was killed in 661 (Pinault, 1999; Kelidar, 1983). The Shi'a endorsed the Imamate whereby Mohammad's direct descendents were considered the right people for his legacy. That is, in their point of view, Imam Ali, the cousin of Mohammed, should become the first Imam, followed by his family, or from other members of Ahl-al-Bayt.

²⁶ Ghadir Khumm's pronouncement is significant to Shi'a believers. This statement appeared in a collection of Hadith by Ibn Hanbal stating the following: "We were with the Apostle of God in his journey and stopped at Ghadir Khumm. We performed the obligatory prayer together and a place was swept for the Apostle under two trees and he performed the mid-day prayer. And then he took Ali by the hand and said to the people: 'Do you not acknowledge that I have a greater claim on each of the believers than they have on themselves?' And they replied: 'Yes!' And he took Ali's hand and said, 'Of whomsoever I am Lord, then Ali is also his Lord. O God! Be though the supporter of whoever supports Ali and the enemy of whoever opposes him.' And Umar met him [Ali] after this and said to him: 'Congratulations, O son of Abu Talib! Now morning and evening [i.e. forever] you are the master of every believing man and woman'" (cited in Campbell 2008: 435).

The notion of the Shi'a as a religious sect was further consolidated after the killing of Ali's son, Hussain and seventy two of his companions in Muharram in Karbala in Iraq in 680 (Elbadri, 2009). This was followed by the taking of the women and children of his family as prisoners to the Muslim Caliphate in Damascus, when the latter received news that he was planning to revolt against his rule in Iraq. This became known as the most tragic event to the Shi'a all over the world, known as Muharram, which refers to the first month of the Islamic calendar and Ashura is the first tens days of this month. After the murdering of Hussain, the Shi'a remained aloof from politics and the subsequent Imams from Ali's family were persecuted and/or killed (Elbadri, 2009). The last Imam, or the twelfth Imam, according to Shi'a doctrine, disappeared into a dungeon Samarra in Iraq in 874 after the death of his father (Yaluh, 2011: 1). This was known as the small occultation which in 961 was transformed into the absolute occultation, under which it was believed that the hidden Imam, or Imam al-Mahdi, would come back one day to establish justice not only in Muslim countries, but also throughout the entire world (ibid). Consequently, the Imamate forms one of the most important concepts for the Shi'a in that the Imam is both the political and religious leader of the Ummah (Arjomand, 1979), who has a divine place close to Mohammad. The Shi'a considers the Twelve Imams who are descendents of Mohammad as the only legitimate and infallible Imams and leaders of the Ummah. Hence, until the return of the hidden Imam they believe they should stay aloof from politics as it is not their responsibility to be involved in leading the people.

The question subsequently arose as to who would lead the Ummah until al-Mahdi's return. The answer was said to rest with the learned jurists, including the Ulama (religious scholars) the Marja'iyya (source of reference), or Mojatahid, Faqih, which all refer to religious authorities. Following Imam al-Mahdi's absolute occultation in 961 (Elbadri, 2009), the Shi'a religious establishment or al-Hawza, adopted the principle of Taqqiyah, which means 'dissimulation of faith', so as to avoid political and religious harassment by the state and thus to be able to live harmoniously with the government or oppressors (Arjomand, 1979; Marcinkowski, 2006). al-Marja'iyya, the highest religious authority for the Shi'a, was established in Najaf in

the eleventh century by the Shi'a jurist al-Tusi (Kadhem, 2012: 25; Arjomand, 1997), who established al-Hawza, a Shi'a school tasked with spreading the teachings of this doctrine. al-Marja'iyya also ran Shi'a community affairs, including marriages, funerals, inheritance matters and the organising of the collection of Zakat and Khums for redistribution to the poor. From this it can be seen how the religious authority represented by al-Marja'iyya guides widely informs Shi'a social affairs. Each Shi'a man or woman is expected to follow or emulate a Marja, seeking advice from him on issues relating to social, religious, and even political matters. To this day, the Shi'a pay their religious taxes to their emulated Marja, who has to provide the Shi'a with leadership through the introduction of Fatwa or religious edicts whenever deemed necessary, which they are obliged to follow. The Marja, according to Litvak (1998), has continued to be seen as the charismatic authority who has combined superior knowledge in religious law along with a very modest life style (Litvak, 1998: 15). In general, the Marja'iyya for the Shi'i denomination holds the most powerful position as the "theoretically authorized" (Sakai, 2001) leader of society, tasked with the role of guiding the community in its social, religious and political affairs and thus, can appear as being more powerful than political parties, particularly if he decides to engage in political debate (Sakai, 2001).

This created division between the supporters of Ali, who became known as Shi'a and the majority of Muslims called the Sunni. In fact, those of the Shi'a denomination form a minority of Muslims of about 10 percent when compared to the Sunnis. However, in Iraq the Shi'a comprises 60 to 65 percent of the population (Shanahan, 2004). This division between sects of Muslims also has financial implications, whereby Khums, a religious tax that was paid to Mohammad was agreed by all Muslims, which as Rahimi has explained "is a special annual tax that Shi'ia pay one-fifth of the value of their land, silver, gold, jewellery, and profits made from goods found in the sea, which is spent mostly on the needy, orphans, travellers, and on the prophet and his family. However, one-tenth of Khums is required to be paid to a high-ranking cleric or marja' al-taqlid 'The Source of Imitation'" (Rahimi, 2007: 6). This was continued by the Shi'a, for they saw this as a right for Mohammad's family after his death. However, the Sunnis refused to

acknowledge this right since they believed that it was only appropriate for Muhammad when he was alive. The importance of this source of funding for the Shi'a as the main resource for their organisations will become apparent later on in this thesis.

Historically, the state was led by the caliph from the Sunni sect while the Shi'a remained a marginalised minority. Following the end of the last Islamic Ottoman state and the British occupation of Iraq, al-Marja'iyya was divided as to whether to rally against the occupiers or to remain aloof from politics. That is, two stances appeared, with one faction calling for Jihad, and the other deciding not to intervene in politics. Moreover, following the formation of the Iraqi state and the emergence of political parties, new Shi'a political groups emerged in the 1950s (Al-Khursan, 1999) that called for changes to the social and political life, some of which wanted the establishment of an Islamic state or at least a commitment to Shari'a law (Sakai, 2001). This new development was opposed by one group of al-Marja'iyya claiming that establishing political parties was a Western phenomenon and did not fit with Islam (Yamao, 2008).

Other active Marja'iyya saw no conflict between the forming of political organisations and Islam. The Marja'iyya, such as Mohsin al-Hakim and Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr, were amongst those who endorsed their establishment (Sakai, 2001). Those who followed the political line that endorsed the religious establishment represent the Activist trend, while the other trend is known in literature as Quietist. The former was led by the founder of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the political groups belonging to which being renamed as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) in 2009. The founder of SCIRI, Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, was also the founder of one of the Shi'a NGOs that are studied in this thesis, namely: al-Mehrab Foundation for Islamic Preaching. The Quietist trend pertains to the Shi'a Marja: al-Sistani. Following the war on Iraq and the collapse of the previous regime, these two trends became central to the new reality of what is known as the Shi'a revival, whereby they took advantage of the political opportunities that emerged. Next, it is important to explain the concept of the Shi'a

revival as it appears in the literature, and also clarify the terms: Quietism and Activism.

5.2.1 The revival of the Shi'a

The revival of Shi'a in the post-war era in Iraq can be understood as their empowerment following the toppling of the Ba'th regime, which is seen by some authors as a marker representing the end of a period of Sunni ascendancy (Jankunis, 2007). The political vacuum that followed the invasion of Iraq enabled the Shi'a political groups to seize power and practise their religious rituals on a massive scale. This achievement was seen as a gain that both the government and movement had to promote and protect (Nasr, 2006: 179). Given that they were able to seize power with support from the US, they are, unlike their counterpart Sunni Islamic NGOs, not motivated by an anti-Western agenda (Nasr, 2006). To the contrary, the Shi'a political groups and religious establishment have benefited from the democratic discourse that was brought by the US war on Iraq, seeing the elections as the way to win political power. The revival of the Shi'a has not gone unchallenged, for it has been subjected to a backlash (Jankunis, 2007) from the previous regime supporters, who were banned from taking power in the post war era through the de-Ba'thification policy that was announced in 2003. This policy (Nasr, 2006:198) has intensified conflict between the Shi'a newly emerged political groups, and the remnants of the previous regime, who redefined themselves as Sunnis, thus equating "de-Sunnification" policy with de-Ba'thification (ibid). The post war conflict between the Shi'a and Sunni, according to Nasr (2006), opened up the old division between the two sects in relation to conflict over political power and resource distribution, The Shi'a revival has also been seen as a factor that empowered and emboldened the Shi'a outside of Iraq, such as those in Bahrain, the Shi'a minority in Saudi Arabia, and also Hezbollah in the Lebanon in its struggle against Israel (Hesova, 2007: 97). Despite the Shi'a political parties holding power in Iraq since the elections held in 2005, at the time of the writing of this thesis, the Sunni Islamic militias were controlling large amounts of Iraqi territory (Smith et al, 2014: 1), thus being a great threat to the state. However, the Shi'a groups in Iraq do not form a

homogeneous group and have been historically divided according to religious-political tradition as Quietists and Activists, each linked NGOs.

In sum, while the formation of political parties was a new development for the Shi'a in the 1950s, after 2003 another new entity arrived on the scene, namely, Shi'a non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These NGOs were welcomed by the different sections of Shi'a, both Quietist and Activist, but before I consider the Shi'a NGOs in Iraq, it is pertinent to discuss the origins and characteristics of these two trends.

5.2.2 Quietism and Activism

In the post war era of 2003, the two concepts of Quietism and Activism attracted a lot of attention. This debate surfaced following the emergence of a powerful role for the Quietist Marja'iyya in Iraq in shaping the political map of the state post invasion (Braam, 2010). The literature shows that, historically, Quietism is longstanding in Shi'a politics (Rahimi, 2004; 2008, al-Kifae, 2010; Braam, 2010; Rizivi, 2010; Smyth, 2012), with the key tenet of this trend being that Shi'a clerics must refrain from intervening and taking a political role over the Ummah, or Muslim community. This doctrine has resulted from the conviction that the Shi'a recognises no legitimacy for any fallible Imam to lead the Ummah. Under this lens, it is contended that religious clerics have to wait for the return of the hidden Twelfth Imam or the Hidden Imam²⁷, Imam al-Mahdi, who represents a divine authority, being descended from the Prophet and that he will come back one day to end the corrupt political system; replacing it with a just society in line with Islam (Kadhem, 2013; Marcinkowski, 2006; Kalanatari, 2012; Arjomand, 1979; Cook, 2011; Litvak, 1998). Up until the return of the Imam, the Quietists believe that the clerics have a duty to advise according to the best interests of the Ummah, only if the political circumstances allow for this. If the political situation leads to violence or oppression, the Shi'a, whether lay or jurists, may utilise al-Taqqiyah. This refers to

²⁷ The last or the twelfth Imam of the Shi'a is a descendent of Mohammed and went into hiding in 961 because of the political oppression of the Shi'a. He is believed to be coming back some time in the future.

the 'dissimulation of faith' by believers in order to protect themselves and live harmoniously with the government or oppressors (Arjomand, 1979; Marcinkowski, 2006). The Shi'a religious establishment represented by al-Sistani is a key symbol of this trend.

The Activist trend, although sharing the faith in the eventual return of the Hidden Imam, believe that religious clerics should not be passive as they have a duty to lead the Ummah until his return. The Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution²⁸ in Iraq (SCIRI) ²⁹ was the first and most powerful representative of this trend, and it demanded the formation of a theocratic state in Iraq following the system of Iran, known as *Welayat al-Faqih* (jurist guardianship) (Jabar, 2003:424). The SCIRI advocates that the highest cleric or Marja has a right to rule the Ummah in social, religious and political affairs, whereby he is entitled to the role of the general deputy (*niyaba 'amma*) for the Hidden Imam³⁰ until his return (Litvak, 1998). This claim was rejected by the Shi'a Quietists in Iraq represented by Marja'iyya Ali- Al-Sistani, as they do not accept that fallible men can take up the role of leading the Ummah. In general, both trends formed linked NGOs after the war (Rahimi, 2004, Slavin, 2008). At this time, a serious debate emerged as to how the Activist/ Quietist dichotomy would play out in the new political era, given that the higher Marja'iyya of the Shi'a in Iraq, namely al-Sistani, who represents Quietism, became more politically proactive prior to the 2005 elections. Whilst he maintained his traditional stance not to intervene directly in state politics, he did issue a Fatwa calling on all Shi'a to vote in the elections, which people acknowledged and took to mean they should elect Shi'a candidates. By contrast, the Activists, such as SCIRI, who had called before 2003 for Islamic revolution and the establishing of a form of state similar to Iran, i.e. *Welayat al-Faqih*, also joined the new political settlement by agreeing to compete for power through democratic elections.

²⁸ SCIRI is the Shi'a religious coalition established in 1982 in Iran and it adopted *Welayat al-Faqih* (jurist guardianship). This party changed its name in 2007 to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, and is the founding father of the Martyr of al-Mehrab Foundation. Both the party and the FBO are led by Ammar al-Hakim, the grandson of the Mohsin al-Hakim, the activist Shi'a Marja, who died in 1970.

²⁹ This party changed its name in 2007 to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq,

³⁰ The Hidden Imam is al-Mahdi, who the Shi'a believe went into hiding in 961 and who will return one day to bring justice to the world.

Some authors reject viewing Quietism vs Activism as black vs. white, or politicised vs. unpoliticised (Smyth, 2012), as the new developments in Iraq led all Shi'a actors to revisit their stances in line with the new political opportunities. Smyth suggested that there has been a shift in Shi'a politics from the Quietist line towards a form of what he called 'semi quietism', as the Marja'iyya has stepped out from its traditional role; influencing the political process from Najaf where it is based. Smyth based his argument on the claim that despite the Quietists rejecting the formation of an Islamic state, they have not been absent from intervention in politics. The above reviewed literature on Quietism and Activism, has touched upon the issue of the role of the clergymen in the state, however it has not considered the fact that both trends have formed linked NGOs. In fact, very few works have discussed the NGOs in Iraq and their links to political parties or the religious establishment and none of them have identified the existence of Shi'a NGOs. In the following section, the extant literature on NGOs in Iraq is first reviewed and this followed by discussion of the empirical findings from the field work regarding the formation of these organisations and their various characteristics.

5.3 The new political opportunity and the formation of NGOs

The NGOs concept was unheard of during Ba'th rule when the dominant form was the mass organisation linked to political parties, such as the Iraqi Communist Party, who established women's organisations in Iraq for the first time (Fischer-Tahir, 2010: 1383) and trade unions, the Ba'th Party, and the Islamic Da'wa Party (Yamao, 2008: 247). These acted as arms of the political parties representing specific groups, such as: women; students; youth; peasants; and the trade unions. They were supported, funded, and supervised by the political parties and became "to some extent part of the party structure" (Nørlund, 2007: 74). The formation and the relationship between the members of these organisations were governed by their affiliation and belief in the ideology of their respective parties, which involved a high level of trust based on "comradeship" (Nørlund, 2007:84). Thus the political parties, whether they were communist, Islamist or Ba'thist, established linked organisations, for example, all formed women's organisations (Fischer-Tahir, 2010:

1383). It was the communist party who pioneered this move of creating mass linked organisations and this structure was later adopted by the Ba'athist and Islamic parties in their struggles to obtain state power. However, those organisations linked to the communist and Islamists vanished once their political parties were attacked under the rule of the previous regime in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the only remaining ones eventually being those associated with the Ba'ath party. Despite the fact there were no NGOs before 2003, charitable social welfare provision did exist, being run by religious networks that collected and distributed religious taxes.

Here, it is pertinent to review the literature that has covered NGOs in Iraq, which highlights three main areas of interest: Their social role in providing for the poor and carrying out a range of activities to serve their communities; the negative impact of the link between the NGOs and political parties on the nascent democracy in Iraq; and the impact of the sectarian division of the distribution of humanitarian aid and social welfare provided by these NGOs. Slavin (2008) explained that NGOs, some of which are linked to political organisations, shouldered different responsibilities from the outset after the war, ranging from policing the roads and maintaining security after the collapse of the previous regime (Slavin, 2008), to collecting rubbish from the streets or carrying out missionary roles, such as promoting the values and teachings of Islam. Saral's (2009) research affirms that the new religious networks provided important services, such as "medical care, education, marriage mediation and help for job search" (p18). The link between NGOs and political groups or the religious establishment has also attracted the attention of some authors, who have pointed out that these organisations were established by political groups and the religious Marja'iyya, such as the Martyr of al-Mehrab Foundation, al-Sadr groups (Slavin, 2008) and al-Sistani's organisational network (Rahimi, 2004).

Rahimi (2004) highlighted the positive role played by al-Sistani's social network in promoting democracy in Iraq and advancing a state-independent network of organisations. Whilst Kerr (2009) claimed that the link between the NGOs and religious parties would have a negative impact on the development of democracy as

any political role for these organisations would undermine their ability “to promote the independence and neutrality of civil society vis a vis the state” (Kerr, 2009:16), which would consequently entrench religious and political cleavage. That is, political ties would have a corrosive effect on the NGOs’ ability to perform effective surveillance of the state as well as their playing a useful role in engineering political change through lobbying, monitoring, education and mobilisation. Al-Shammam (2008) in his PhD thesis takes the debate further by explaining that Islamic NGOs in Iraq are, in fact, a product of these political parties, since they are funded and led by senior leaders who are high ranking politicians. As the religious parties are polarised on sectarian bases, therefore, their linked NGOs operate according to the sectarian divisions, which are not confined to the NGOs, for they also pertain to mosques.

Given the sectarian nature of the political conflict following the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime, mosques have played an important role as a place, not only for worship, but also for “providing information, ideology, and organization in the name of the religious group” (Hoffman, 2014). Furthermore, the mosques have turned into sites for political mobilisation. In general, in the Islamic world, Muslims gather for Friday prayer, whereby mosques have become places where they gather not only to be informed about religious affairs but also political ones. In addition to the Mosques, the Hussainaia have provided space for political mobilisation, in particular, during election times not only for the Shi’a, but also for the Sunnis (Hoffman, 2014). As a consequence, the mosques that accommodate collective prayer and Hussainaia that host the Shi’a rituals act in Jabar’s words “more like a political agent, information, and ideological center,”. (Jabar, 2011: 22).

The literature shows that mosques have been used by the religious establishment as well as Shi’a religious groups as places for mobilising community organisations. Mosques loyal to al-Sistani through their networks of Imams and preachers have demonstrated this activity on a widespread basis. In a similar way, those linked to the Sadrist networks have used the mosques in some areas to disseminate their political messages (Zuhur, 2006: 22). SCIRI, following the collapse of the regime, used mosques as avenues to denounce Saddam and put up posters of Mohammad

Baqir al-Hakim as well as al-Khomeini, seeking to gain control over Iraq's main (Shiite) mosques (Middle East Report, 2007; 18). This gave the organisation a platform in many mosques to run the Friday sermon and also to make its political statements on a weekly basis.

It is also apparent that in addition to the political role of mosques, they have been involved in charity provision for those in need. For example, al-Sistani's linked foundation, according to Rahimi, gave \$25,000 to the imam of the mosque of Kadhemiyah in Baghdad to be spent on charity in 2004. (Rahimi, 2007: 7). Clearly, Mosques have not been isolated from the socio-political affairs of the daily lives of Muslims in Iraq, but rather, have become important places for the Shi'a community organisations to thrive. This could explain the reason why Shi'a mosques were targeted frequently by Sunni insurgents, which reached a climax on 22nd February 2006 when the Shi'a Imam mosques were bombed in Samarra and resulted in sectarian violence sweeping the country and bringing it to the verge of civil war (Middle East Report, 2007; 13).

Another stream of literature addresses the role of the NGOs in spreading the Islamic faith. Saeed (2010) highlighted how in the southern part of Iraq, an area populated by Shi'a, many NGOs have emerged as organisations affiliated to the sect that aim through their work with their communities to Islamise society (2010: 76). Saral (2009) has pointed out that movements aiming to spread the word of Islam have almost always been present in Iraq, and that this vocation was taken up by newly established religious networks post 2003. Saral also claimed that division based on sectarian, religious, ethnic and tribal lines has been ever present in civil society and hence, a trans-ethnic network across this society is absent in Iraq. Consequently, this division is seen by many as being able to provide "an alternative for the aggregation of interests" (Saral, 2009:19). That is, this fragmentation amongst these NGOs has led them to "seek to influence their own societies by promoting segregation and conflicts and by fuelling the ethno-religious conflicts among them" (Saral, 2009:19).

Murphy (2004) contended that the principle of impartiality in social services aid provision by the NGOs is absent in Iraq, because these organisations divert the delivered aid to local groups of their affiliation. For instance, the author explains that funds from the Gulf countries to Sunni organisations in Iraq are distributed in line with these donors' political agenda. Similarly, Hansen (2008) pointed out that external donors to the country provide support for people based on their sect. He attributed this as being the logical extension of the increasing sectarian divisions, whereby it "infers less impartiality and greater politicisation in resources allocation" (p26).

From the above reviewed literature, it can be seen that there is marked absence of Shi'a NGOs being mentioned and consequently, there is no knowledge about their roles and outputs in the post war era or their objectives and functions. Moving on to the field work, it emerged that the roles of the NGOs amongst those I interviewed from both state and non-state NGOs are unclear, which is perhaps not surprising as they have only emerged in the last decade in Iraq. However, the social and charitable roles of the religious establishment or al-Marja'iyya were confirmed to have existed even under the rule of the previous regime and have never been interrupted.

An interviewee close to the Shi'a NGOs explains:

RA C3: The regime would not allow the Marja'iyya to provide their support in a framework of NGOs, therefore, they could not go in the past to the houses and provide their support for those in need. The Moqaldin [the emulators, followers] and Wokala [al-Mara'iyya agent] carried out this responsibility on behalf of al-Marja'iyya, secretly. The charity work of al-Marja'iyya existed before and now. The Marja'iyya never stopped its support and help for people.

While religious charity provision was possible through the distribution of Zakat and Khums by and for Muslims, and justified as a religious duty under the rule of the

previous regime, secular provision of welfare was close to impossible and those who tried to engage in it could face severe punishment. An interviewee from a secular NGO explains this as follows:

SM CA: The previous government had prevented any one from doing voluntary work and supporting others, This was seen as a political action. It happened that once they sentenced a doctor and pharmacist to prison who voluntarily initiated and offered free services to patients during the economic sanctions period as they did not get permission from the state and their action was considered as taking over the state's role.

The formation of NGOs was absolutely new and unknown to Iraqis. For this reason, there was the perspective that this phenomenon had been imported by people who came from abroad. Regarding which, according to the interviewees, these NGOs were mainly formed by exiled Iraqis who had experience of this type of organisation either in Western countries or in Kurdistan. Subsequent to the latter gaining autonomy after the first gulf war in 1991, NGOs³¹ became a feature of the landscape and after 2003 some of these Kurdish organisations extended their operations to the whole of Iraq (Fischer-Tahir, 2010). The founders of the new NGOs had access to international funders as well as knowledge about setting up projects and carrying out fundraising. However, these new experts in this field were not necessarily seen as a positive development and in one interview with a senior manager of the Ministry of Planning (MoP) he commented as follows:

SM P1: these organisations were formed by people who were abroad and had no real knowledge about Iraqi society issues, and what are the society's needs. All they talk about is gender... and they want to carry out surveillance on the state's work..... Who are they to watch the state's performance? We have been told that these NGOs have to attend our planning meetings. They

³¹ I carried out interviews with Islamic Sunni NGOs in Kurdistan as well as secular NGOs, in which it was confirmed that these NGOs had existed for some time in the region. In fact, the Islamic League, comprising Sunni NGOs, was established in 1988 in Germany by Kurdish exiles and then moved to inside Kurdistan in 1991.

only talk and talk and do nothing...These people came back from exile and have no knowledge about how things are done here.

The emergence of NGOs was also not celebrated by other state organisations. In my interview with a manager from one department of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs (MoWSA) he stated the following:

SM WS1: these NGOs work to get the poor's votes in the elections. Wait and see.. when the elections come ...you see they are here [in the ministry] all the time here, distributing for widows, for the disabled. They come to us and tell us that they want to distribute to the poor. They remember the poor only in the elections time, and then they disappear.

An interviewee from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported:

SM UN1: The UNDP tried with the Iraqi government to accept civil society as a development partner. We tried to make sure that the NGOs were represented in development project planning. But there is a huge confusion; there were many new things that were taking place at one time and so it was difficult to take all these changes together. The civil society here is like a bird that was for so long in a cage, suddenly you open the door, and you asked the bird to fly. The government do what they know, NGOs are immature, unprofessional. Like any thing else in the country is going through a transition era, it is going through changes in every thing, politically, in security, socially, and economically.

Owing to the newness of the NGOs, the role of this sector remains unclear to many including those running the state institutions and the level of suspicion towards them is high. An interviewee from a women's secular NGO explains:

SM WC1: the statesmen have no idea what NGOs means. It happened that I spoke with a senior manager in one of the ministries, when I told her we are NGOs, or we are CSOs; she said what does that mean....they do not like us. They think we are competing with them, or we want to occupy some positions in the state.

Suspicion of the intentions of the NGOs was also expressed by interviewees from Shi'a NGOs, regarding which one from al-Mehrab shares:

SM M5: we are not like any other organisations who distribute for the poor in the elections time. We provide for the poor all year long.

Despite the wish of the international organisations to integrate the NGOs into the development plan, in terms of making a contribution to its different stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring, alongside the state, the responses from the ministries were not encouraging. An interviewee from a secular NGO reports:

SM CA1: The current state is similar to the state we had before the war. It still has a key role, and this role was articulated in the constitution; it is clarified that the state is responsible to provide for the needs of different layers of Iraqi society: children, youth, women. It explained that the state shoulders the larger responsibility. The acknowledgement of the role of civil society, was extracted forcefully from politicians, and it was indicated in a very weak way in the constitution.

Given their only having been around for a few years, the NGOs' role in development in the era after the war of 2003 has yet to be investigated in any detail and in fact, they are rarely mentioned in this context in the literature. In my correspondence with Frank Gunter, the author of a work about the political economy of Iraq, on the 24th April 2014, regarding their role he stated the following:

“When I left Iraq in 2009, NGOs were in their infancy and - due to their questionable legitimacy - were making a very limited contribution to Iraqi society. There are several reasons for the perceived lack of legitimacy. Many Iraqis seemed to distrust these organizations as being foreign innovations since they only appeared after the U.S. led invasion in 2003. Also, I think that the GoI [Government of Iraq] saw the NGOs not only as vocal critics of GoI actions, but also as competitors in that they sought to provide some of the same services that the GoI tried and failed to provide. Finally, there is the question of finance. NGOs that are funded by the GoI, political parties, religious groups, etc. are not seen as independent voices”.

Thus, from the field work interviews, it seems that after a decade of work by the NGOs in Iraq there is still suspicion about these organisations’ motivations and intentions. This is not only the perspective of state organisations, as became apparent through my interviews with respondents from two ministries of the GoI, for this has also been reported as being problematic by the NGOs themselves, both religious and secular.

Despite there being little information about their role, the field work shows that NGOs in Iraq are carrying out work across the country, are legal and have funds allocated to them either by their linked political group, through religious donation, the state, or internationally. Their formation and regulation began in 2003, when the CPA issued Order 45 concerned with these matters, which was followed by the establishment of a specialised ministry for civil society organisations. However, this was dissolved later on due to the notion that civil society had to be independent from government. Order 45 was seen, on the one hand, as a positive development when it was passed, as it aimed to control the rapidly mushrooming number of NGOs. However, on the other hand it was criticised owing to its restrictive nature, whereby it failed to meet the minimum standards for NGOs. Subsequently, law 12 was issued in 2010, which was perceived as a positive development, because it “is considered as one of the best and most liberal NGO laws in the region” (NCCI, 2011: 23) In addition to this law, a General Directorate of NGOs was established linked to the prime minister’s office charged with supervising NGOs’ affairs (NCCI, 2011: 22)

and their role was also acknowledged in the constitution in 2005 in article 45, which declares that the state shall seek “to strengthen the role of civil society institutions and to support, develop, and preserve their independence” (Iraq constitution, 2005).

The number of registered NGOs, according to Saeed (2010), in 2005 was 2,535, in 2006 was 5,071, in 2007 was 5,669 and in 2008 was 7,000. However, following the issuing of law 12, the number registered declined to 1,681 in 2013 and 1,831 were unregistered as they lacked the basic requirements (NGO Directorate, 2012). There is no formal distinction between religious and secular NGOs, but many of the former use Islamic symbols in their names and/or religious leaders’ names. For example, 87 organisations carry a reference to Islamic Shi’a phenomena or names, such as; ahl-al-Bayt, Fatima, Zainab, Mawakib, al-Hussain, al-Hawra, Imam, al-Zahra, al-Karrar, al-Mehrab, or simply Islam. Other Shi’a organisations investigated for this research show no indication of their orientation in their names, but are still motivated to act in line with Islamic values. From my interviews with state and non-state NGOs, both religious and secular as well as international, I identified five types according to their objectives, which I describe below.

First: Voluntary social initiatives, which started straight away after the war performing social work that served the public good in a particular suburb or sector. For example, in the education sector a number of such initiatives were organised at the grassroots level to address the shortfall in schooling. This could involve transferring teachers in war affected areas or forming groups of men to protect female students from violence on their way to and from school. In my interview with a female academic who took part in these initiatives to support local communities, she explained that their aim was to protect their community and to ensure that daily life carried on normally, in particular, for students in their schools. She explained the purpose of their work as follows:

L PS1: when the state institutions collapsed, civil society organised itself by itself; we organised groups to clean streets; we dealt with the lack of

security situation, we adopted a system where teachers could resume their work in schools close to their homes instead of having to travel to schools away from where they worked. Voluntarily committees were formed by fathers and brothers to escort girls to and from their schools, and also to guard them while they were there. We decided to move the final exams in universities to July instead of May; this has happened for the first time. We were connected with each other, nobody was giving us orders, we organised it ourselves. But, once the money poured in for the civil society organisations, people's spirits were badly affected".

The availability of funds impacted negatively on civil voluntary initiatives as the competition over them directed the focus away from the community to self-serving practices and as a result, these groups vanished or were turned into registered NGOs. In my interview with al-Thabat the respondents affirmed that when they started as pious Shi'a women to conduct Muhrram (the first month of Islamic calendar) rituals and the mourning sessions of al-Hussain, they had not heard about NGOs, however, later on they came to understand that they could turn their voluntary initiative into a formal NGO.

Second: A group of NGOs was established by those who became aware that this kind of organisation could run projects by being funded by international donors. The funds were made available so as to promote such matters as democracy, gender equality and human rights awareness. In particular, money was donated on the eve of the elections so that these NGOs would educate their service users about the meaning of democracy and the purpose of voting. In my interview with a secular NGO, the respondent explained that in the first two years following the war the focus was on humanitarian support, but just before the elections this shifted to a project to promote democracy, as this was the desire of the international donors.

Third: There is a group of organisations that are either religiously or politically linked NGOs. That is, this group was formed or at least inspired by the religious authority or al-Marja'iyya, or directly linked to political parties and they are funded

by these entities. They are Islamic NGOs³², some of which are Shi'a established as organising bodies for ritual activities, whilst others were formed on the eve of the first elections and were indirectly involved in the writing of the constitution. An interviewee close to the al-Marja'iyya linked to the NGO Directorate³³ explains:

SM ND1: In regard to the Shi'a NGOs, there are two types of organisations, those that were established by al-Marja'iyya directly, and they are significant, others are only supervised by his office. The organisations that are supervised by al-Sistani may not be known widely, but they are massive. The Imam Redha institution has built first class schools. Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah's³⁴ organisation is a very powerful one. Mr Haji's³⁵ organisation follows al-Sistani. The Martyr of al-Mehrab³⁶, his two sons, each has his own organisations. Regarding the Saeed al-Hakim³⁷ foundation, two of his sons have their own organisations. These are massive Shi'a organisations. Fadlallah has a hospital for cancer disease.

The representative from the Directorate of the NGOs explained to me the scope of the projects of the Shi'a NGOs, which includes: hospitals, schools, orphanages, libraries and internet coffee shops. Moreover, he confirmed that there are more new projects on the agenda of al-Marja'iyya that are mainly directed at the education of youths. The directorate interviewee reported that the funding of some of the Shi'a NGOs is substantial and that much of the money is collected through Khums (religious tax) This has, in fact, provided them with a source of income that is unavailable to their counterpart Sunni NGOs (Halm, 2007).

³² Other organisations, such as al-Mehrab, were established in Iran before the war on Iraq, and moved after 2003 to Iraq.

³³ General Directorate of NGOs is a governmental institution that is linked to the Council of Ministries and it supervises the work of the NGOs.

³⁴ A Shi'a Lebanese Marja who has followers in Iraq and whose organisation has its own linked NGOs that run health projects and a hospital in Baghdad.

³⁵ This is a nickname of one of interviewees that I met in the NGOs directorate who also leads an NGO.

³⁶ The first political leader of ISCI, Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, who was killed in September 2003.

³⁷ One of four key Shi'a Marja based in Najaf.

Fourth: Family based NGOs are linked to prominent Shi'a families who enjoy a high reputation and have earned the public's trust for their religious role and their social provision for the poor. This type of NGO is well known in Arab countries, especially in the Lebanon (Jawad, 2009).

Fifth: Iraq has also witnessed the formation of what is known in the literature as briefcase NGOs (Lee, 2014). The term brings forth "imagery of an impeccably dressed individual holding a well-written proposal in a briefcase. The individual leading the briefcase NGO receives funding for their proposals, but ultimately pockets the money for themselves rather than use it for any programs" (Lee, 2014). This form of organisation emerges "in response to a particular situation", especially in corrupt states (Ferris, 2005: 318). They have been operating in both the central state and the Kurdistan region, being established by unscrupulous individuals who disappear with the money after just one project or not implementing any. According to some respondents, they have given NGOs, in general, a bad reputation.

From the above descriptions, it can be seen that Iraqi NGOs, have a range of activities, including social welfare, development, support for democratisation and advocacy. Consequently, although they have been acknowledged and regulated it remains unclear as to what their role should be. Moreover, the state, as has become apparent from the fieldwork and the literature, continues to play a key role in all aspects of Iraqi life despite the efforts to reduce its involvement. For example, the state provision of the public distribution system or monthly ration that has been available in Iraq since 1991 remains a social safety net that provides for more than one million citizens, including the most vulnerable, such as orphans, widows and the disabled, from an allocated budget of more than \$500 million per year (US Embassy press release, 2013). Following this brief introduction to the five types of NGOs in Iraq, my interest is now focused on Shi'a ones, many of which appear to have become financially powerful during the new era of the Shi'a revival (Nasr, 2006).

5.4 Shi'a NGOs' sources of funding for their activities

The NGOs do not “float freely in social space” (Salamon,2010:190), but rather, they are guided by their own vision whether religiously or politically driven, running different activities aimed at helping those in need and providing services, such as health and education. They have set up hospitals and schools to advance their missionary goals and reach out to wider communities. This form of organisation spreads in a situation where there is religious pluralism (James, 1987). They have the incentive to reach out and communicate their political or religious objectives and they are firmly “embedded” in the prevailing social, political and economic structures (Salamon, 2010: 190). They operate in an array of relations between citizens, other organisations, and the wider society. In the literature, the NGO is considered as one of the components of the contemporary political setting that contributes along side other governmental agencies to provide social welfare, development, and/or advocacy, in particular, as participants in social policy formation.

The Shi'a NGOs were formed by different groups, such as: political parties; the religious establishment; Shi'a families; and Shi'a grassroots activists. I carried out interviews with five Shi'a NGOs, however, I decided to focus on those representing two trends within the sect: Activists and Quietists. al-Mehrab adheres to the former stance and is linked a political party, ISCI, whilst the others are the CDF, an umbrella organisation and one of its members, al-Thabat, both of the Quietist persuasion. Here, I shed some light on the financial resources of these NGOs, which is important as their financial capacities determine their ability to reach out and serve their community. al-Mehrab is funded by ISCI, the state, international donors, and from religious resources, such as Khums. The CDF is also funded by the state and internationally, while al-Thabat, having no links to political parties, relies heavily on their community's religious taxes. Regarding which, al-Thabat was advised by its advisor, the Wakil of al-Sistani, as follows:

SM T1, the Sayad (Mister) told us that the organisation has to learn how to raise money from the people, learn how to communicate with others in a good way, in a way that makes people feel confident to donate their money, and that their money will not be wasted. The money goes for the sake of God. The funds we receive from people is not little, it is from the society, as we are not linked to a political party, and we do not have other links that tie us to others.

Their local community work with their women service users attracted the attention of political groups inside and outside of Iraq, who approached the organisation, offering, according to the interviewees, huge amounts of money to support the expansion of their welfare provision programme. However, the members of al-Thabat feared that if they accepted the money, this would mean that they would be forced to act politically in line with the donor's agenda, which they were not prepared to do. One of the interviewees clarified this as follows:

SM T2: Accepting big amounts of money means accepting big demands as well. We have been approached by the political parties here, and also, because we are Shi'a organisation, it is Iran and not Saudi who will approach us. Iran supports many organisations, and we see no wrong with that, since the organisations are providing for the poor, helping the needy and running wide educational programmes. There is nothing wrong with all these, but... we are afraid... that... we might be seen as an Iranian agent... by other international donors... so we do not want to lose the potential opportunity to be funded by other international ones, we want to keep our autonomy.

al-Thabat, as a Quietest organisation, attribute their inability to access to state funding as their not being linked to any political parties. Therefore, they are much less fortunate than their counterpart Shi'a NGOs, like al-Mehrab, who have access to the government's social benefits fund. In my interview with a secular women's organisation, I was informed that the state began this programme in 2009, through which money was transferred from the state budget to the members of parliament,

who were tasked with redistributing these monies to their constituency. These funds were stopped after a while, as acts of corruptions were found in the distribution and subsequently, when they were resumed they were distributed in a much tighter way that was closely audited. Regarding the earlier arrangements, she explained:

SM WC2: In 2009, the state granted 50 NGOs social benefits. Most of the organisations that received the fund are those linked to people in the government or parliament mainly with religious affiliations. For example, the al-Jafari organisation for women, Jalal al-Deen al-Sagher received 98 million Dinar (approximately US \$ 90,000).

To summarise, NGOs that are not linked to political parties, like al-Thabat, are not eligible for state funding. In any case, al-Thabat prefers to maintain its loyalty with al-Sistani's approach, keeping its distance from any political parties and thus, they rely mainly on religious money donated by pious Muslims. al-Mehrab, as an organisation that is linked to a political group, ISCI, has secured access to both governmental and international funds, regarding which a senior manager commented:

SM I1 we have funds from the state sometimes, we submit our programmes and they provide us with grants to cover the costs³⁸.

With regards to gaining international funding, al-Thabat has failed so far, with a member of the management committee explaining that although they attended many training courses organised by some of these funders, their proposals had never been successful. As a member of that NGO explains:

³⁸ The experience of the Islamic Sunni CSOs shows that the support of the state for these organisations includes sometimes paying the wages of some employees of the organisations, however, it is not known if such provision from the state to NGOs is also practised with the Shi'a NGOs in the central state.

SM T2 We receive no funding from international donors. Every time we were told to 'submit a proposal and you will get something', we tried, al-Noor association³⁹ tried too, but every time we were told that our applications were not successful. We have heard that there is corruption in the international organisations. Their representatives here are Iraqis and they of course facilitate the funds for those they know and are close to them. We know nobody there, and that is why we cannot get funds.

By contrast, al-Mehrab does receive international support, as an interviewee from ISCI explains:

SM I1: At the beginning we thought that international donors prefer secular NGOs, but that was not true, they granted all organisations equally in professional way. Although the name of our organisation indicates our identity, however, we have gained their trust. This has a positive influence on people here; they see us as trusted organisation that is able to attract funding for its projects from abroad, from international organisations.

To summarise, NGOs linked with political parties or those close to the government are more fortunate as they can obtain financial resources from the state and international donors. However, Shi'a working at grassroots level, as in the case of al-Thabat, have to rely on pious Muslims' donations and their community. The reliance on religious taxes given by the Muslim community has remained a fundamental steadfast source for providing for welfare, regardless of whether those organisations providing it are linked to political parties in power or not. In sum, financial sources are essential for NGOs to carry out their activities and those linked to political parties are able to obtain more money than those with links to the religious establishment and those with no association with either of these.

³⁹ al-Noor is a Shi'a women's organisation that works closely with al-Thabat, some leading members of the latter are also members of the former.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the formation of the Shi'a sect was from the outset political in nature, being attributed in the literature to political conflict for power since the seventh century. The consolidation of the Shi'a as a religious sect was the result of the political oppression against this denomination by other Islamic Caliphate states that ruled the territory of Iraq since the birth of Islam (Kadhem, 2012). In response to the historical oppression, the Shi'a religious establishment adopted the position of staying away from politics. However, the formation of Iraq as a state after the British left and the formation of political parties, brought the Shi'a back to the political scene, which included the involvement of the Activist trend who claimed that religion should be at the heart of the state. Nevertheless, this was not entirely accepted by all Marja'iyya and the trend known as the Quietists contended that the Shi'a religious authorities should remain apolitical. The new developments in Iraq post the invasion of 2003 brought the Shi'a the opportunity for the first time to rule. This was conceptualised by Nasr (2006) as the era of the revival of Shi'a. Another new development for this the sect took place during this period; the formation of NGOs or sometimes called civil society organisations. The chapter has briefly explained how some of the NGOs were perceived with some trepidation, for they were considered to represent outside influence in the country's affairs. Amongst these organisations were Islamic Shi'a NGOs, which, as in other Middle Eastern countries, have worked successfully to support their communities by providing services for the poor. Also, as with these nations, the Islamic Shi'a NGOs set out to influence the state and society by exploiting their religious or political affiliations. Evidence has been provided that these affiliations and the intentions of these NGOs have determined their sources of finance and the level of their capacity to exert their influence.

Chapter 6: Social services activities of the Shi'a NGOs

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on analysing the social provision activities run by Shi'a NGOs. In doing so, the research questions addressed are: what are the main social services, religious, or political activities that they are engaged in? And what is the significance of these services and activities for the state and society in Iraq? More specific questions addressed are: what are the social services that Shi'a NGOs are engaged with? For who and why are these NGOs engaged in these particular programmes? What do they provide? How do they provide it? What are the expected outcomes of their provision? Two Shi'a NGOs, al-Mehrab and al-Thabat, are the contexts where these enquiries will take place. It is contended that providing for the poor serves three connected aims: it helps the poor, in particular widows and orphans as well as well young people who lack financial resources for weddings; enforces theological social behaviour; and also it expects to bring about political outcome from the service user loyalty to their providers. The underline objectives of the social provision of the Shi'a NGOs appear to be directed to protect family.

This chapter will study the most important welfare provisions: the in-cash transfer for widows and orphans or Kafala, and collective wedding ceremonies. It is divided into three sections: section 6.2; understand the motivation and the values behind welfare provision for widows and orphans; section 6.3 analysing sponsorship of widows and orphans; section 6.4 will analyse the collective wedding ceremonies for young poor men. Section 6.5 is devoted to understand the Shi'a NGOs' social welfare influence on the poor and wider society. Each section will explain the values that underpinned the motivation and the justification of each provision. It is also will highlight the influence that these NGOs hope to achieve through their provision.

6.2 Sponsoring widows and orphans - or Kafalat al-Yateem

This section will explain one of the most significant and common provisions for Shi'a NGOs, i.e. cash transfers for widows and orphans, through their provision of Kafalat al-Yateem (sponsorship of orphans). All Shi'a NGOs cater for these groups, including the two NGOs, al-Mehrab and al-Thabat. The socioeconomic situation of widows and orphans situation in Iraq has already been explained in chapter 4, affirming that the war and further violence created a large number of female-headed households, who can be especially vulnerable to intergenerational poverty (Buvinic et al., 2013). In the following I will explain the meaning of Kafalat al-Yateem, exploring the key values that inform this provision.

6.2.1 Kafalat al-Yateem (sponsorship of orphans): Religious justification

Kafala is an Arabic word which means sponsorship. In this chapter it refers to cash donated to widows and orphans. It is a form of social charity aimed at assisting poor widowed families with small amounts of money because of the loss of the main breadwinner of the family, or male member(s). The Kafala is financial assistance provided by a pious Muslim to another Muslim who is an orphan or widow. This provides the poor with small sums of money so as "to guarantee, to help, to take care of one another's needs" (Mughal, 2008: 21). It entails two parties: the Kafil (the donor), who is usually a pious person making his or her donation to a poor orphan or widowed family; and Makfol (the poor) or the sponsored orphan or widow. An interviewee from al-Mehrab defined an orphan as a child, male or female, who has lost his or her father. The definition of the family adopted by the Shi'a NGOs is in line with Pahl's conception, which states that the family is "composed of two married parents and their children, with a father as the main breadwinner and the mother as the homemaker" (Pahl, 2012: 127). Consequently, families who have lost their breadwinner are an important category for Kafala, provided by the state, non-state organisations or even individuals. The religious donations, whether voluntarily or obligatory, is a duty 'imposed on all', including NGOs. A rich person was defined by an interviewee from al-Mehrab as the one who "owns a hoard enough for him

and his family for more than a year and has economic security” He is obliged to watch over others’ needs, in particular for those who are less resourced and more vulnerable, such as widowed families. In the following, I explain the motivations that guide the provision for widows and orphans.

6.2.2 The religious motivation for social provision

Generally, the focus on supporting orphans is common to most Islamic NGOs as there are many references in the Quran as well as in the Hadith (speeches of Mohammad) emphasising the importance of taking care of orphans. Mohammad said that those who provide for orphans will be with him in paradise and “The best house among the believers is the one in which an orphan is treated well and the worst house among the believers is the one in which an orphan is mistreated” (Duh, 2010: 2). It is also referred to in one of Mohammad’s Hadith which states that for Muslims to be able to realise their goals, they must have pity on orphans and provide them with the food (Kraffess, 2005: 333). Given that wars, economic sanctions, civil war and political oppression cost the lives of hundreds of the thousands of men, which led to an increasing number of orphans and widows, this provoked the Shi’a NGOs to step in to provide for their needs.

In this chapter, it is argued that providing for the poor is motivated by religious, social and political concerns. The first driver of this provision stems from the notion that providing for the poor is a religious duty that is instructed by God; and Muslims are obliged to respond to this. The fulfilment of this responsibility or Takleef, brings God’s satisfaction as well as divine rewards in life and in the after life. Muslims who provide for the poor will gain Ajr and Thawab (recompense/compensation/reward), which are among the most powerful motivations for pious donors as well for the administrators. Thwab and Ajr include blessing in life by more fortune, success, increased wealth, and reduction in envy the poor. The workers of these organisations perceive their work as a blessed work, fulfilling a divine duty since this includes helping the poor by administrating and facilitating the transfer of religious money from the Kafil to the Makfol. An interviewee from al-Mehrab explains:

SM M3: God, May He be Glorified and Exalted, imposes a religious duty upon us to donate to others from our money; Zakat and Khums, even the Sadaqqa we give away in the streets are all parts of social care. When God imposes this, he did not enforce it on one political party for all are required to pay it. The Muslim has to pay Khums; other donations are recommended to be made for those in need since people like to do good deeds for Thawab and Ajr. Shari'a calls on us to do so. These donations act like a safety valve for a Muslim's morals, for it helps him to stay away from bad deeds such as corruption. This money is paid for God; it shows Muslim loyalty, their commitment to the lord of the universe.

al-Mehrab employees, although they are paid workers, understand their role is motivated by the religious order, and hope to gain God's pleasure. As an interviewee from al-Mehrab put it:

E M8: When I work, I do not want a result from the organisation, the result of our work is saved with Allah, the lord of the universe. Even if my organisation does not grant me my rights, what is most important is God's satisfaction of our work, when we provide Sadaqqa, we give it for the sake of God.

6.3 The Kafala provision to protect the family and the wider society

In the Islamic, hierarchal and patriarchal context the father assumes the role of the head of the household (Binghalib, 2011: 4). Shi'a NGOs appear to uphold the patriarchal view that men are the breadwinners and are central to the family. Men have two roles: "to protect" and "to dominate" (Haddad, 2006:59). He is not only responsible for securing the livelihood of his family, but also for monitoring their social norms, i.e. watching out for the behaviour of both his siblings and his wife. The father, therefore, has a social role, for he "acts as the representative of the family to society at large, presenting the families beliefs, values and morals (Mourad

and Carolan, 2010). Consequently, the absence of the male breadwinner creates a gap not only in terms of livelihood, but also regarding the protection of family. From this perspective, the intervention of other Muslims is seen by Shi'a NGOs and by all Muslims as necessary to maintain both the livelihood the family and to inform their social behaviour. An interviewee from al-Mehrab explains:

SM M1: Our aim is to protect the family through helping widows, orphans and families who lack living means. Our work is to protect and safeguard the family entity. To have a good society, Mojtaba's Salih, we have a Takleef (religious responsibility and intervention) that is imposed upon all Muslims.

Providing widowed families with cash support or other kinds of social assistance, for the Shi'a NGOs, serves to protect the family from seeking any unacceptable means to make their living and to inform their social behaviour. They contend that any harm to the family resulting from the absence of a male breadwinner, has a negative on the wider society of Muslims or Ummah because society is formed of a congregation of families. This is a shared objective that motivates and informs the two focal Shi'a NGOs' welfare provision. An interviewee from al-Mehrab explained the consequences of not helping:

SM M1: If the NGOs do not reach some families who are in need either for medical assistance or food, this will lead to psychological breakdown, aberration, moral drift, and deviant behaviour from the family side. These threaten the family and society.

Another interviewee from al-Mehrab explains the Islamic vision in maintaining the family as a model to protect the wider society:

SM M3: The experience of Islam in family building is very successful. The family can resist and hold for a long time and will not collapse quickly. This is because this institution [the family] is based on a number of principles and disciplines that inform its behaviour, and guide it towards security and

sustainability. I believe if humans uphold the idea that society is formed from a congregation of families, these families live with each other and they will watch out for each others' needs.

One of the important justifications for supporting the poor in Maqasid al-Shari'a or the Shari'a objectives, is that it allows the poor to carry out religious duties. The family is defined as a "microcosm of the Umma" (Ra'uf cited in McLarney, 2010: 129) and as the smallest but fundamental cell of society, "where the most important basic rules of a community are exercised and practised" (Mohagheghi, 2006: 71). It is seen as the place where children receive their religious education, learn the right social behaviour, and are taught that they should show mercy towards one another. Moreover, it should shape the youth and women's behaviour, such that family members remain chaste and unpolluted. In sum, the Shi'a NGOs take the view that society will act in harmony and be protected from social and economic harm when families are sufficiently religiously and financially endowed so as to be able to contribute to the stability of the Ummah.

An interviewee from ISCI put it as:

SM I1: we believe that the family is the basic 'infrastructure' of society. The society is not based on individuals; there are no individuals outside the family. Individuals are members of a family. The building of the family is the way to build a society. We see the family as the first social unit.

An interviewee from the CDF states their vision in regard to the importance of family:

SM C2: what Islam wants is a system in place; we have our traditions that we are obliged to submit to, regardless of whether we agree with them or not. These traditions confirm the importance of the mercy for each other. We believe that successful families do create a successful society.

This enforces the notion that a good society that follows the path of Islam could be established if families act in line with religion; this way, families “share the same ‘thick’ values” (Shani, 2008: 729). In Ra’uf’s words, the family forms a “political unit of Islamic Umma” (cited in McLarney: 2010: 129) or as another scholar puts it, the family represents the Umma as writ small, and the Umma represents the family as writ large (McLarney, 2010: 129). Thus, any challenge to the family, such as the absence of the father is thought not only to affect the family but also society as a whole. For this reason, the Shi’a NGOs shoulder their religious responsibility in meeting widowed families’ needs and the young men who are in need for help in forming their own families. Following the exploration of the key motivations for the Shi’a NGOs social welfare involvement, I now turn to consider their types of provision, to whom it is given, how it is collected and distributed as well as the theological implications regarding their participation.

6.3.1 The Shi’a NGOs Kafala provision and other support

Before discussing the Kafala provision, it is useful to address the support for widows and orphans provided by the state. In 1980, Social Care Law 126 was passed, which provided state provision for Iraqis unable to work as well as widows and orphans. The government of the day justified this law through the notion of achieving “social justice, and to widen distribution of resources to reach those who are most in need” (Ebrahim and Hussain, 2009: 112). The provision was funded and administrated by the state ministries. In 2004, a reform of the social care under the Social Safety Net was introduced targeting the poor and vulnerable population, including orphans and widows (De Freitas and Johnson, 2012: 13). This programme provides widows with 50,000 to 120,000 Iraqi Dinars (43 to 103 USD) in cash per month, adjusted by the number of household dependents (IOM-IRAQ Special Report, 2011: 8). However, according to Alkhoja and Dawan, the cash transfers have only reached 6 percent of the 22 percent of the population living below the poverty line (Alkhoja and Dawani, 2013: 1) In particular, corruption by Social Safety Net programme administrators has made the current cash transfer system not been very effective (Alkhoja and Dawani, 2013), According to interviewees from the Ministry of Work

and Social Affairs (MoWSA), some governmental effort has been put into fighting corruption⁴⁰, but it is still widely present.

Governmental social assistance has not stopped or prevented the Shi'a NGOs from providing for widowed families as they are motivated by both their religious responsibility and their understanding of the impact if their needs are left unmet. al-Mehrab is known for its Kafala provision, with the total number of the orphans being supported through the Kafalat Al-Yateem project which has reached, in some years 186,000 orphans; but by March 2013, the number was 85,000 orphans as was stated by a senior manager of al-Mehrab. This has been mainly distributed geographically across all cities in the middle and southern parts of Iraq with orphans in Kurdistan also being entitled to the NGO's support. However Najaf city, Basrah and Baghdad are the top three cities for the distribution of Kafala. This provision is run by the charity department; one of the most important sections of al-Mehrab, which began its work for widows and orphans in May 2003 through cash transfer, in kind provision, capacity building for widows, and organising collective wedding ceremonies for youth who want to wed but lack the financial capacity to do so, as discussed in detail later in this chapter.

al-Mehrab distribute to every widow Kafala of approximately 24,000 Dinars (US\$ 20-22) for widowed families the in-cash transfer which is usually paid bimonthly. However, sometimes the donor decides the amount of the cash for every orphan. For example a donor from Bahrain informed al-Mehrab, according to the interviewees that he is willing to make 24.000 for every orphan. al-Mehrab in some occasions bring the amount of cash distributing to around 10.000 Dinars and sometimes it replaces the whole amount with different kind of goods distribution, such as rugs, or sometimes provides swing machines instead of cash.

⁴⁰ This was explained to me by the interviewees who brought many examples of state officials' corruption.

al-Mehrab distributes its Kafala by phoning widowed women and asking them to come to collect their money. The workers make lists to call and every time a group of 50 women attend their office, which is located in better off residential areas and has some security measures. The widowed women are usually invited to come to the office on a specific date and at a set time. The worker, in her room, calls the name of the woman one by one to hand the cash for them. To give a sense of what this amounts to in terms of purchasing power in the Iraq market, I list here the prices of a number of items per kilogramme in dollars: lamb meat US\$ 9, fish US\$ 3-4, and a dozen eggs US\$ 3-4, tomato US\$ 1 and the minimum rent in southern cities of Shi'a populated areas was US\$ 250 per month in March 2013. In addition to the provision of Kafala, the organisation sometimes provides widows with rugs, cookers, and/or refrigerators. al-Mehrab also provides capacity building programmes for widows and to this end, a number of workshops and training schemes are organised. An interviewee from al-Mehrab made the following statement:

SM M6: We do not pay in cash only, but also we organise sewing courses to enable women socially. We do this so that widows do not need to rely on anyone any more. We have distributed so far 23,000 sewing machines to widows. This means we have made available job opportunities where women can work and at the same time maintain their dignity and honour. And we organise courses to eliminate illiteracy.

Hence it can be seen that al-Mehrab's provision goes beyond cash transfers, for it is also aimed at capacity building for women to enable them to sustain their living by themselves. Whether all the supported women would be able to make their living through sewing, is unknown, however, this training does give them the possibility of alleviating their circumstances. In addition, al-Mehrab is aware that when working towards obtaining jobs for widowed women it has to protect their dignity through finding work that is mainly gender based and avoids mixing with men. By so doing, this Shi'a NGO is providing Kafala whilst at the same time protecting societal values.

al-Thabat, as explained in chapter 3, was formed as an organisation with its first and foremost mission being religious awareness raising. However, it moved into Kafalat al-Yateem provision an increase in the number of widows and orphans following sectarian violence between the Sunni and Shi'a in 2006-2007. The experience of al-Thabat differs from other Sunni Muslim organisations in that they have usually been set up to provide social welfare and subsequently moved towards missionary objectives. However despite aiming to reinstate Shi'a rituals, al-Thabat and other Shi'a NGOs recognised the hard realities of poverty for women and orphans and so became involved in supporting them. An interview from the organisation explains:

SM T1: We started our work with widows in 2006-2007, it was a catastrophic situation. Every woman had a terrible story. We sympathised with these women. We realised that women had different priorities from us. We provide education but they wanted food. So we had to find ways to make Kafala for them. Something we had never contemplated. The widows who attended our Hussainaia did not have an interest in listening to lectures. How can any one think about education if he is hungry?

al-Thabat members reported that their Kafala budget is between US \$2,000 and \$2,500 annually, with the number of orphans receiving it being 79, although this is not a fixed number, and the number of the donors (by March 2013) is 29. They explained that the number of sponsored orphans changes from time to time, as this organisation has an allocated Kafil to each Makfol, or sometimes the Kafil supports two Makfol at the same time. The amount of Kafala, generally, is 25,000 Iraqi Dinars (US\$ 20) a month, but this varies from one Kafil to another with some paying as much as 100,000 Dinars (US\$ 90) a month to their chosen Makfol. The donated money, which is paid in cash to the organisation, is saved separately from the rest of its budget, so no mix up with other monies can happen. This to indicate that the Kafala money is religiously intended to help the orphans, so it would be a sinful act if the administrators did not deliver as the donor required. The person in charge

keeps the donated money in a plastic bag in a safe place, with a record of the names of the orphans and a list of their Kafala. One interviewee commented that:

SM T1: It is an orphan's money and it is Haram to make any mistake in the distribution. So we have to separate this money from the rest of our spending.

Underpinning Kafala provision for both the donors as well as the administrators of the focal NGOs is the concept of faith (Sider and Unruh, 2004). In sum, both these Shi'a NGOs rely on the religious alms to distribute to widowed families, and have a set of criteria and procedures to follow in order to provide their support. In the following, I explain how and to whom these NGOs distribute Kafala.

6.3.2 Khums, the main financial source of Kafala provision

It is important to consider the financial source of Kafala as it sheds light on the wider socio-political context in which this provision is delivered. The money is religiously motivated in that it is only provided to Muslims and only within the Shi'a community and hence, it is sectarian in nature. This can be attributed to the financial source of these funds, which is al-Khums. Khums, meaning a fifth, is a religious taxation system practised within the Shi'a denomination and involves 20 percent of their extra annual income (Kadhim, 2013: 69) from profits or savings as well as assets such as property, land that have not been used during the previous year. As Halm (2007) explained "in principle, every Shi'ite, is required to pay one-fifth of all profits-regardless of the trade or business they are from" (Halm, 2007: 93). This is to be paid annually to the al-Marja they emulate through his representative or directly to those who are perceived to be poor descendants of Mohammad's family. However, Khums religious alms only pertain to the Shi'a sect and not the Sunnis. It was started in the seventh century as religious tax donated by all Muslims to Mohammad and his family. After his death in 632 AD one Muslim faction who were descendants from his family, claimed that the proceeds from the tax were rightfully theirs and so should be continued. Others dismissed this claim,

refusing to acknowledge it as 'a right' or a religious duty and arguing that it was only valid for Mohammad when he was alive. Those who supported Mohammad's family's (ahl-al-Bayt) claim became known as the Shi'a and hence they were the only people who engaged in Khums.

Khums is usually given over to al-Marja'iyya's network of agents, Wakils or their representatives, either in their offices or in their own mosques. Hawza students who are also linked to al-Marja'iyya have the right to collect the alms and send them to al-Marja'iyya too (Patel, 2005:14). These networks, according to Patel, are run by the Marja'iyyas' sons who are connected to collaborators either based in the mosques or office. They receive the alms from the Shi'a (Patel, 2005:14) and transfer them to al-Marja or distribute them to those in need if they have authorisation to do so. The al-Marja'iyya's office representative or his Wakils while providing for widows and orphans, also transfer Khums to the Shi'a NGOs to distribute it as they see it fit. From the other direction, if the Shi'a NGOs are unsure about what to do with Khums money that they receive from lay Shi'a, they may transfer it to the Wakils, or at least they may advise on how to distribute to those in need effectively.

As Khums is rooted in Shi'a tradition it has to be spent only on the Shi'a, i.e. the money has to serve the community that it came from (Khan and Murdock, 2011). There are no financial reports about the amounts collected or distributed and it remains the primary source for Shi'a NGOs to fund their Kafala provision. In fact, it provides the Shi'a with "a sum of money- much greater than their Sunni colleagues have access to" (Halm, 2007: 93). The distribution within Shi'a community was explained by a representative from al-Thabat as follows:

SM T2: we are little bit worried to use the Khums money, as it has some conditions if we want to distribute it, for example, I cannot give it to a family that does not pray because it is possible that they do not spent it on the child. When we receive Khums we hand it to the Sayad, (the person transcendent from Mohammad family and linked to al-Marja). These monies

are Hoqoq (religious money belongs to people) and we have to be very precise in using it in order to purify the donor's intention before God. However, for Sadaqqa (voluntary religious alms), we do not feel afraid of it. We may give it to anyone, even to a family that is not very poor, or to those who are not really religious. It is Sadaqqa, I could even give it to a Christian family.

It can be seen that Kafala distribution involves theological commitment in which the care, charity and compassion are directed towards deserving community members, but only the Shi'a. In Davis and Robinson's words, this notion of community "has elements of both inclusivity and exclusivity" (Davis and Robinson, 2012: 12). For, not only are non-Shi'a excluded from this provision but so too are some within the sect, because the NGOs have the power to set their own criteria to decide who is entitled to receive it and who is not. In what follows, I describe the criteria that the focal NGOs apply to their Kafala provision.

6.3.3 The criteria for Kafala provision

To determine those entitled to Kafala, both organisations: al-Mehrab and al-Thabat, as a first step, endeavour to establish whether there is a widowhood case and then if any orphans are within a certain age group, i.e. under 18 for boys and 20 for girls. In addition, the family should have no other resources for their livelihoods or any type of property, such as owning a house or land. Working male orphans under the age threshold are not entitled to any support and married female orphans do not receive any assistance because covering living expenses of a married woman is considered to be the husband's responsibility. However, sometimes Kafala can be given regardless of these conditions if the organisations decide to do so. An interviewee from al-Mehrab explained that:

E M8: some managers are very strict in the provision; others, God bless them, say these women receive only little money from others, so we should not cut their Kafala. Our current manager said we will not cut their [widows]

Ratib (salary) even if they receive money from others. The poor widows try to make their living; they try to collect from here and there. He says, give them their Ratib and do that with respect to their dignity.

From the above, it can be seen that the managers can use their discretion regarding who receives Kafala. Some given their inclination to support the poor as a whole (Davis and Robinson, 2012) as a religious duty, extend their donations to people who do not come within their organisation's criteria. There seemed to be some confusion amongst the Shi'a NGO representatives as to whether the criterion of loyalty of the service users to the Shi'a NGO principles had to be adhered to. The interviewees in senior positions held that the cash transfers are unconditional, being only for humanitarian purposes with no strings attached, whilst those at the middle level, saw that requesting loyalty from service users was reasonable since the NGO has had already helped them when they needed it. Those at the grassroots level were of the view that helping the poor was for the sake of God, nothing else and hence, there should be no link between service provision and political or religious loyalty.

Despite these different views within this NGO, i.e. al Mehrab, the evidence from the fieldwork demonstrates that there is a clientelistic culture exercised and enhanced by the Shi'a NGOs through their Kafala provision. Given the link between this NGO and its politically associated party, \$20 bimonthly Kafala serves as an economic incentive for thousands of widowed women to give their votes to ISCI during election times. One interviewee claimed that if their NGO provided for the poor, it would obtain their unconditional love and devotion without their having to ask for it. As explained in the literature review, this identified relationship takes the form of clientelism found in developing country contexts as described by various authors (Trejo, 2009, Hopkin, 2006; Piattoni, 2001). That is, this Shi'a NGO utilises its provision to gain votes during the elections in particular from service users who are members of their own sect, such that it has become "an integral component of ethnic and sectarian politics" (Cammatt and Issar, 2010: 381).

However, the evidence from al-Mehrab shows that this NGO extends its clientelism beyond election times by encouraging service users to enhance their knowledge by following its other activities including those of its associated political party, ISCI. This involves, asking them to watch the ISCI TV satellite channel Satellite (al-Furat); watching the weekly talk of Ammar al-Hakim as well as attending the meetings organised by al-Mehrab or ISC, amongst other activities. During the election the widowed women are expected to attend the office from where they are transferred collectively by buses to the places where the meetings are held. Loyalty to al-Hakim, as a family behind al-Mehrab, NGOs was discussed by one of the interviewees:

E M8: We have loyal women. They love al-Hakim family. Widows are keen to know about our work and attend our programmes; they are loyal to our organisation. Thus, the question over whether they are loyal to us or not, should not raise any concern; and why should we link this with that anyway. Do the poor have to be loyal to you to give them your Sadaqqa? You give your Sadaqqa for the love of God. It is something between you and the lord of the universe. If I give a widow Ratib (salary) this is to help her and her orphans, why does she have to be a loyal to me? The true organisation is the one who helps the poor, and if an organisation does that, it will find people loyal to it even if it does not ask them to do so.

However, despite the differences between the interviewee's points of views on the relation between social provision and political loyalty, utilisation of the service users' support in terms of acquiring their votes has been practised by the Shi'a NGOs. In chapter 8, detailed discussion about the political mobilisation by the Shi'a NGOs will help explain this link. These NGOs differ slightly in their procedures for identify those who are entitled to their Kafala provision, as is explained in the following section.

6.3.4 The procedures to identify entitled widowed families

Both Shi'a NGOs carry out their Kafala procedures to establish the eligibility of the applicants in an informal manner. The women with a religious background who are appointed to carry out this role are not formally trained. Moreover men are not recruited as they are not allowed to visit widowed families or have interviews with them as usually these take place in their houses. To establish the eligibility for receiving the cash transfer, al-Thabat, as a small organisation, relies on a straightforward process that consists of the following steps: once a widow approaches the organisation, she will be asked to bring some documents in support of her claim. If the required documents are presented, the organisation asks its volunteers to go and visit the applicant in her house to examine the living standards of the family. The volunteers will ask the applicant verbally a number of questions about the family income, the number of orphans as well as whether the widow owns a house, land, or receives any financial support from relatives, other organisations, or from the state. The volunteers submit a report to the management committee who then make a decision. Once the case of providing Kafala is established, the NGO endeavours to find a sponsor. Sometimes it takes photos of the orphans and then approaches rich or at least better off women or men asking them to sponsor them. If they agree to do so, the donor is asked to decide upon the amount of money they are willing to give and will even sometimes provide a reason for donating his or her Kafala. An interviewee from al-Mehrab explained that once the donor has agreed to support, she would tell him or her that from now on the child is theirs, and they are responsible for his or her wellbeing.

al-Mehrab follows a more complicated process to establish the entitlement of the widowed family. First the widow makes an application and then the NGO collects information about the potential beneficiary from its social network. If the applicant is unknown to al-Mehrab, then it uses undercover visits to the applicant's house in order to find the necessary information before a final decision is made. This kind of visit is so as to avoid any embarrassment that might be caused if the family became aware that the aim is to collect information about its economic situation. Not

posing a direct set of questions was also justified by one interviewee as a proper way to show respect for the family's feelings. The aim of the undercover visitors was explained as follows:

SM M6: We do not want to embarrass the family, some questions if asked directly may hurt people's feelings; if you can obtain the needed information indirectly, why should you use a direct way of posing questions?

If the NGO is unable to obtain the required information through its undercover visits, then it proposes an open interview with the potential claimant. During the interview, usually nothing is written down by the social workers and a verbal report is given to the managers along with a recommendation as to whether or not to include the applicant in their Kafala programme. Both the focal Shi'a NGOs the entitlement of the widows and orphans periodically by investigating if there have been any changes in their personal circumstances. al-Thabat remove the name of the widows from their Kafala provision if the family receives support from a relative, or any other source, whereas al-Mahrab continues its support even the widowed family receives help from other Shi'a NGOs. This stance was justified by an interviewee from al-Mehrab because the amounts of income from any donor are not large and hence, many widowed women need small amounts of income from several sources to be able to reach a minimal acceptable living standard. Moreover, al-Mehrab's substantial resources come from different sources, including Shi'as inside Iraq and outside Iraq, in particular from the Gulf countries. This enables it to continue supporting poor families even when some positive change has happened. Since al-Thabat uses the system of Kafil supporting Makfol, the donation may be transferred to another person who is in need if the circumstances of the original beneficiary family have improved.

Following the discussion of the Kafala provision for widows and orphans, I now turn to another form of assistance of one of the focal Shi'a NGOs, i.e. organising collective wedding ceremonies for young men, including orphans.

6.4 Collective wedding ceremonies

Organising collective wedding ceremonies is another important activity supported by some Shi'a NGOs. This is in line with Shari'a objectives since marriage is seen as serving to protect the intellectual, lineage, and religion of humans. Organising collective wedding ceremonies or in Arabic (a'ras jama'iyya) is common in Arab countries as one of the welfare services provided by certain Islamic NGOs in Muslim communities (Wiktorowicz, 2001, Harmsen, 2008). This type of support serves two main purposes; to help recipients financially, and to bring them as Muslims closer to the religious order. Economically, weddings in Arab countries are the highest single cost item during the course of a life (Engelen, and Puschmann, 2011). By 2005, according to a 2006 Egyptian Labour Market Panel Survey, this cost had reached US\$7,000 in Egypt (Singerman 2008) and in Yemen, for example, the dowry costs have risen from US\$ 200 to upwards of US\$ 20,000 within the last generation (Mulderig, 2011: 3). In Iraq, according to the Iraqi Women's League, it ranges between US\$6,000 and US\$9,000, or even more (source). Some youth are prevented from marrying owing to "the high prices of dowries, the high expenses of wedding ceremonies and the exorbitant prices of housing" (Bengio, 1993: 380).

Religiously, marriage is considered a sacred engagement that organises and legitimises relations between the two sexes, helps people to observe individual chastity by "satisfying natural sexual needs as well as for fulfilling the important task of bringing up children (Mohagheghi, 2006: 72). Chastity is considered important in Islam and it is highly praised in the Qur'an. It is said "to prevent natural desires from leading to unlawful behaviour" (Al-Hibri and El-Habti, 2006: 206). Moreover, marriage is considered a religious duty and "one of the greatest divine blessing" (Amini, 1988: 9) and "there has not been created any institution in Islam which is more favoured and dearer to Allah than marriage" (Amini, 1988: 10). In Iraq, organising these collective ceremonies (a'ras jama'iyya) before 2003 by the state was common under the rule of the previous regime, and were sometimes held on Saddam Hussein's birthday, where hundreds of couples were united (Podeh, 2010: 198; Bengio, 1993: 371). These ceremonies were administered by the General Union

of Iraqi Youth (GUIY), which also initiated various other programs such as “extending loans to young couples, helping them to acquire bedroom furniture in instalments, or granting reductions on wedding gowns” (Bengio, 1993: 380). This provision was motivated by the fact that the country witnessed widespread bachelorhood in the 1990s as a result of war, economic sanctions, and emigration “which was expected to severely hit the basis of Iraqi society and its values and have “disastrous” consequences” (Bengio, 1993: 380). Also, according to Bengio, these ceremonies were organised as part of the efforts made by the regime to help young people settle down and shift their frustration away from the dictatorship (ibid). These ceremonies were launched in “all the provinces, once a week in Baghdad and from one to three times a month in the provinces” (ibid), being attended by the governors and the Ba’th Party branch secretaries. The collective wedding ceremonies were thus held with the aim of achieving political outcomes.

The Shi’a NGOs in Iraq began organising collective wedding ceremonies in 2004 and al-Mehrab is one of the most prominent in doing so. An interviewee from the al-Mehrab shared their motivation and values:

SM M5: Marriage is important so a man can think in a normal way. Marriage is one of God’s gifts that we have to thank Him for. Marriage provides men and women with a feeling of stability.

The motivation for organising these events was elicited by a staff member of the charity department of al-Mehrab, who explained:

SM M4: We live in an Eastern society. Men and women’s social status is rooted in their marital status. If a man has a wife and children and if a woman has a husband and children, or even if they do not have children, their entity in the society and their social status will be complete. Marriage is necessary not only for religious reasons but also for social acceptance.

A senior manager of al-Mehrab clarified this:

SM M3: Islam recognises the family, recognises the progeny and protects the blood line of the descendants. Islam does not allow for progeny based on individual freedoms, if that was permitted, society would be a mere gathering of individuals and not a society.

An interviewee of the charity department of al-Mehrab explained why they felt the need to intervene:

SM M4: Marriage is the greatest bond in Islam. Most of our youth need those who are able to provide them some aid. We do that [organising wedding ceremonies] so the young people can take care of their religion.

All the interviewees from this NGO supported the Shari'a perspective that marriage helps in the safeguarding of lineage, intellect, religion, and the existing way of life (Al-Mubarak and Osmani, 2010:5). Moreover it was generally accepted that men who wed have satisfied a basic religious need and can then move forward to prosper in other parts of their lives. In other words, a person who gets married, according to this Shi'a NGO, will have fulfilled a half of his religious responsibility and can now concentrate on the other half.

al-Mehrab, in organising these activities, is acting in line with the dominant cultural norm in Arab countries that consider marriage a "a well-defined turning point that bestows prestige, recognition, and societal approval on both partners" (al-Otman, 2005:217). Since al-Mehrab, as discussed above, takes the view that society is not a congregation of individuals and that no-one exists outside of the family, they have to ensure that all youth are able to secure their social status by forming their own family (Mulderig, 2011: 3). Moreover, in Islamic and Arabic culture producing the genetic descendants who will inherit from the father after his death is very important because anyone who is not blood related is not entitled to inheritance, including foster children. In sum, marriage is important for "satisfying natural sexual

needs as well as for fulfilling the important task of bringing up children” (Mohagheghi, 2006: 72).

Helping orphans to establish families by organising collective wedding ceremonies is one of al-Mehrab’s important welfare provisions. According to a senior manager of the NGO, the number of orphans it has helped is 6,000 out of a total of 12,000 wedded couples it has given assistance to over the last 10 years. This provision, according to al-Mehrab interviewees, was initially funded personally by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of ISCI and al-Mehrab in 2004 and the father of Ammar al-Hakim the current leader of the NGO. In the first few years, in addition to the ceremony, they distributed furniture, such as that for the bedroom; kitchen implements; fridges; and clothes for the bride, including Hijab, and also for the groom. In addition to money being provided for trips to Iran, each groom and bride receives 1 million Dinar or US\$ 900 for “clothing, a bed, and other household goods” (Slavin 2008: 11). According to the interviewees, al-Mehrab invites the wedded couples with their families, and distributes the cash during the celebration. Al-Mehrab organises collective wedding parties for an average of 1,000 couples annually.

However, organising mass weddings by the Shi’a NGOs appears to be a controversial issue. While it is seen by some as helping for young people who are unable to cover their wedding party expenses and hence can take advantage of the in-cash transfer, others perceive it as being the wrong type of provision. Opponents have raised two concerns: the first is economic in nature, and the second is political. The first is that facilitating ceremony costs for young people who lack the real capacity to establish a new family could have a negative unintended impact on the family to be because establishing a family requires much more than just wedding costs. A female solicitor from a women’s’ secular organisation expressed her concerns:

SM W2: Encouraging the poor, who have not enough means to pay for their wedding costs is a wrong provision because if the couple are unable to pay

for their wedding party, how can they make their own living? How can they establish a family? How can they satisfy their needs? How can they satisfy their children's needs? In fact, this organisation covers one aspect of the wedding cost i.e. organising a party but they put the couples into more problems. The organisation will not take care of the rest of the couple's needs.

The second concern that was brought up by a number of interviewees from state and non-state organisations was that this type of provision is aimed at influencing the youth in order to mobilise their votes during elections, since al-Mehrab is linked to a political group. An interviewee who works for an international organisation as well as a local women's organisation explained this as follows:

SM W1: This kind of provision aims to gather people around these institutions. It would be mistaken if anybody thinks these organisations are only blowing empty slogans. They are religious-political organisations based on religious traditions. They rely on youth, on their staff, and their beneficiaries.

The perception that organisations, such as al-Mehrab, run this kind of activities for political objectives to gain votes was mentioned frequently by different organisations and from the state ministries as well. This view could be valid given the process of organising these events, the selection of those who benefit, the place where the events are held, and the speeches of Ammar al-Hakim during the ceremonies. According to a staff member of al-Mehrab, the course of the selection of couples who are supported to take part in the ceremonies does not begin with al-Mehrab but ISCI. The latter manages the process of application and recommendation and then sends those nominated to al-Mehrab's office in order to organise the ceremony. The names of those to receive support are then posted on its website stating the time and place of the ceremony.

The choice of the place and time to hold the ceremonies is significant. They are carried out either in the main offices of ISCI or in a stadium. The ceremonies normally take place, according to one interviewee, during religious events, such as the wedding date of Imam Ali and Fatima, Mohammad's daughter or during Eid al-Ghadir. In February 2013, these ceremonies were organised for the first time on St Valentine's day, with Ammar al-Hakim instructing the grooms and brides to love one another⁴¹. The ceremony starts with a reading from the Quran and a speech by Ammar al-Hakim, the leader of al-Mehrab. Through his speech, the wedding becomes an opportunity for raising awareness and pedagogy. al-Hakim explains the benefits of marriage not only in this life but also in the afterlife, confirming that "those who want to win the heaven and the last day have to seek an early marriage"⁴². In addition, he affirms the importance of a good family, the duties of a wife towards her husband, and the husband's responsibility towards his wife. He also calls on the wider and extended families to help the newly wed couples, without intervening in their family affairs.

These ceremonies are funded by Shi'a dignitaries who often wish to remain anonymous. The refraining from mentioning their names stems from their belief that according to an interviewee from al-Mehrab:

SM M6: what is submitted by the right hand should not be known by the left one.

The respondent explains, that secrecy of in cash provision is preferable since the aim is to satisfy God's will, not to look for fame. Whether this might cause problems regarding the transparency of cash utilisation does not seem to bother al-Mehrab. By contrast, Muslim Sunni NGOs in Jordan for example, usually invite the donors sometimes from different religious backgrounds or business to the ceremony, announcing their names and the amount of their donated money (Harmsen, 2008).

⁴¹ This was cited on the website at: <http://www.watneon.com>. [Cited on 22-09-2013]

⁴² Ammar al-Hakim speech on collective wedding ceremony in Iraq. Cited on: <http://burathanews.com/news/173072.html> [Accessed on 24-03-2015].

Moreover, these organisations, according to Harmsen, present a “bridal gift and contributions of interest free loans to the newlyweds, organise lectures and workshops related to marriage and family issues” (Harmsen, 2010:104). The Shi’a NGOs seemed to have a different approach as the donors for these events are only known by the organisation.

al-Mehrab, through the collective wedding ceremonies, has been building a wide network with the Shi’a middle class community which funds this provision, as well as the poor young people who benefit. By conducting this activity it attracts the trust of the Shi’a business community and gains a reputation of achieving a religious aim by helping young people hold their weddings. In turn, the pious Shi’a from the rich class, who share similar convictions with al-Mehrab, donate their religious taxes, Khums, or Sadaqqa to support these events. An interviewee from al-Mehrab told me this enables them to organise impromptu ceremonies. For example, if a merchant asks them to organise a ceremony for 10 or 20 young men, and he can pay for the cost of the celebration, then they will do so. In addition to fulfilling a religious duty by supporting the ceremonies, given that al-Mehrab is a group with close ties to ISCI, these middle and upper class people are making links with political power at the same time. The names of those to be wed are usually chosen through a process of application that is carried out in the ISCI office and often they are not mere beneficiaries, but potential political supporters, as some interviewees from other organisations claimed. In sum, gaining political support from poor, unmarried young people through paying for wedding ceremonies cost is another example of how this NGO uses its social service provision in a clientelistic manner.

In general, the intention of al-Mehrab in organising these events is permeated with religious values because they are convinced that relations between men and women have to be organised in a marriage form. This means that they do not acknowledge any other forms of sexual relations between humans and hence, all such relations outside of marriage are considered a sin. This form of restricted relations has to be followed whether Muslims like it or not because it is a religious edict. With this perspective, al-Mehrab is not pro the right of choice, or individual freedom, but sees young people, as members of a community whose social and

sexual relations they have to shape in line with the religious order, which is why it covers the costs of some of their weddings. This provision also has pedagogical value because the ceremony itself is a space where the leader of al-Mehrab, al-Hakim, delivers his speech about his vision of the good family. Given that the interviewees earlier in this chapter have explained that the family is the basic cell of the society, this shaping and informing family behaviour is a building block that helps guide society as a whole. Thus it can be concluded that this programme is permeated with faith in terms of its motivation because the organisations expect that those in receipt of help will become more pious and exhibit theological commitment (Sider and Unruh 2004). Moreover as the provision helps the poor with marriages, it allows them to form their own families and hence provide the basic units of the Ummah.

While this provision installs the norm of social relations from the point of view of al-Mehrab and ISCI, it also appears to serve political objectives in that it obtains financial support of the rich class who like what the NGO and ISCI are doing. It also creates a pool of potential voters from the youth who benefit. In sum, the collective wedding ceremonies serve multiple purposes: distributing religious alms as a religious duty to help the poor; contributing to the creation of a sacralised community; and helping a religious party into powerful state positions.

6.5 The Shi'a NGOs' social welfare activism influence on the poor and wider society

The Shi'a NGOs are active in Kafala provision and helping poor youth. In doing so, they contribute to enhancing religious values and creating a sacralised society in the following two ways.

a) The Kafala donation is meant to lighten the burden of Muslims so they can take care of their religious duty, such as worship and conducting religious rituals, attending mosques, praying and fasting, and visiting the holy shrines. These religious activities all contribute to build a good Muslim. In this way the social

provision itself is not targeting only the immediate and the pressing needs of the poor Muslims, but also achieves a higher aim, i.e. that of worshiping God by implementing his order. Moreover the contribution of the wedding cost is expected to help shape the personal life of individual Muslim in line with Islam. This is seen as a means to protect the family that is fundamental to creating a theological community. However personal autonomy and right of free choice do not exist because everything has to be divinely informed.

b) Given that the Islamic alms distribution has to serve the community where the revenue has come from, a form of sectarian distribution was bound to emerge. In other words, the Kafala provision funded by Khums would reach some Muslims who are Shi'a but not all those in need. This enhances the Shi'a community cohesion rather than the wider community. Given the intensified sectarian environment in Iraq, this kind of provision has accentuated the division between the poor Shi'a and other poor because the latter have been excluded. However, since it is serving the Shari'a objective, Maqasid al-Shari'a, which is permeated with faith and is structured towards following the orders of God, then the Shi'a NGO workers are fulfilling the original mission for which they were established. In other words, taking part in Kafala provision or organising collective wedding ceremonies is seen as a blessing rewarded by Thawab and Ajr, both in this life and the afterlife.

Despite the Shi'a NGOs engagement in providing for widows and orphans, they perceive the economic impact of the social provision as limited and insufficient. The economic impact of the Kafala was articulated by an interviewee from al-Thabat:

SM T1: what we provide is equal to one basket of vegetables and maybe one kilogram of meat, no more. So, we are not really providing for the poor but we show them our sympathy. The money we give to orphans is not enough for anything. It is kind of hosting a guest in your house just to be kind and generous with your guest. We may be able to put a smile on the orphan's face when we give him some cash but we cannot secure his living costs.

Another interviewee from al-Mehrab explained that what they provide is little, but still better than nothing. However in spite of the limited economic impact of the Kafala, it has a strong psychological influence on the widows' well-being which would be absent were they not in receipt of help. An interviewee from al-Mehrab described the importance of the Kafala for widowed women:

E M8: well, it is a small amount of money, and if a widow pays for the transport, and buys a bottle of water on her way to our office, then something has gone already. But if we tell the widow that your salary will be stopped, she would cry for it.

The Kafala provision provides women with an opportunity to go out, visit NGOs, and take part in activities. When I visited the al-Mehrab's office, the widows were on a trip with their children and received a free lunch in a religious restaurant, socialised with each other and met women not only from Iraq, but also Shi'a women from outside the country. When I told the worker that the meeting had corrected my gloomy image about widowed women, the worker explained that:

E M8: widowed women can go out; they do not have the previous control of men in their houses, so they feel more free and independent. Also these widows do not receive support from al-Mehrab only, they do go to different NGOs linked with Marja'iyya or religious families and they get something from each organisation. Some NGOs send the widows to Hajj, others distribute Hijab, or give toys and games for orphans. That is why (the worker said smiling) you see them happy and content.

However, there is a shared perception that what is provided by these NGOs is not responding to the poor's needs. An interviewee from al-Mehrab explains:

SM M1: to guarantee the poor rights, welfare has to be secured by the state. It is not possible to leave the fate of the orphans in the hands of NGOs. There must be a governmental body to take care of orphans, and

mechanisms to distribute help to them. Despite the fact that civil society is carrying out this role now... it cannot take it on for very long.

This vision about the Shi'a NGOs role in providing for widows and orphans exhibited from the experience of the two organisations, large and small, linked to a political party, or to al-Marja'iyya, was that they are not alternative the state. The Shi'a NGOs believed that the state has to play its role given the extent of society's needs, and that these could not be met by NGOs.

The Shi'a NGOs, such as al-Thabat for example, are engaged in this kind of support to protect the fabric of society from the negative consequences if their social needs went unmet. Their involvement was necessitated by the increasing numbers of widows and orphans who became victims of poverty. This diverted them from their original religious agenda. As mentioned above the two Shi'a NGOs studied in this thesis, were initially established for religious education and awareness raising. One interviewee from al-Thabat expressed her frustration that they had been forced into doing social work because it distanced them from the work they originally set out to do:

SM T1: we do not have a disciplined state, a state that can control the security situation and show care for the people. If the state showed more responsibility, this would reduce the burden on us, we would be able to take a different route. If these problems did not exist, we would go back to our key aim, which is to educate people in order to create a good society, Mojatam'a Salih.

The social welfare services, from these Shi'a NGOs' point of view, should primarily be the responsibility of the state, but when it is unable to deliver this, they accept that individual Muslims have a religious duty to respond to the poor's needs, in particular those who have sufficient wealth to do so. However, in their opinion the state is the richest entity in the country and should therefore shoulder the greatest responsibility regarding the Ummah. In addition to their religious justification, this

conviction could be driven by two other realities: first, as a rentier state, rich in its natural resources, Iraq has a long standing involvement in social welfare since the nationalisation of oil in 1970s; and second, there is a widespread belief that the government is elected to serve the people's interests and distribute the oil revenue, given that the constitution of Iraq in article 111, and 112 states the following:

“Oil and gas are owned by all the people of Iraq in all the regions and governorates and the governments, shall undertake the management of oil and gas extracted from present fields, provided that it distributes its revenues in a fair manner in proportion to the population distribution in all parts of the country” (Iraq constitution, 2005)

It is probably for these reasons that Shi'a NGOs see their role in social service provision as a temporary intervention and not permanent arrangement for those in need. According to the interviewees, the state is expected to carry out social welfare fairly and in a just manner.

SM M1: we formed our organisations to provide for the poor, but this is to fill an institutional gap created by the absence of the state. The needs of the Iraqi society cannot be addressed by NGOs, no matter how much we provide and no matter how big financial capacities we have. The needs of society require a state capacity to respond to it.

This perspective differs from other NGOs linked with theological political social movements as described in the literature, who propose their social welfare as an alternative to the state or to bypass the state (Davis and Robinson, 2012), or even to act as a state within a state (Wiktorowicz, 2004). That is, the Shi'a NGOs are not attempting to compete with the state in the social welfare arena, or to show the public a sense of what they are able to do if they reach power, because they are already in power through their linked political parties or the influence of the religious establishment, i.e. al-Marja'iyya. Finally, there is no evidence to support the view that Shi'a NGOs in Iraq have been attempting to act like their counterpart

para-state organisations in Iran who control substantial financial resources and have a parallel position to the state institutions (Saeidi, 2009). In sum, the focal Shi'a NGOs' social welfare interventions have been in response to urgent pressing needs so as to ensure that poverty would not lead to the destruction of the society.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the social welfare activities provided by Shi'a NGOs in terms of motivations and actual provision in order to shed light on how their activities have influenced beneficiaries and wider society. It has been shown that providing for widows, orphans and collective weddings has been not only helped the poor, but also brings divine rewards for those involved on the delivery side whether they be the donors or the workers who administer it. Kafala provision or helping the young is seen as a religious duty that is expected to help protect individuals, the family and the wider society from un-Islamic behaviour. Given that poverty is seen as threatening not only the family but also the Ummah in general, this provision is expected to maintain religious order and control the social behaviour of the individuals and family in line with Islam as well as having a theological impact on the wider community. However both NGOs do not see their role as complementary to that of the state, or believe themselves to be in competition with it. Instead they see their provision as temporary and once the need is addressed by the state and/or others then they will revert back to delivering religious education or raising awareness. They are of the opinion that the state is rich enough to provide because of oil revenues and point out that the constitution requires them to cater for all citizens. The social assistance of the two focal Shi'a NGOs, whether linked to political parties or to al-Marja'iyya, would appear to have been driven by similar religious motivations. Although they have some difference in their provision procedures these have not been very significant and thus, it seems that whether Shi'a NGOs adhere to the Activist or Quietist trend has not led to variations in the way they have been operating. Most importantly, the perception that these NGOs provide social services, Kafala and/or support young, unmarried youth to gain political advantage is commonplace. As explained earlier in Chapter 2,

this has been the observed practice in other countries where the state is weak and unable to provide for those in need. In sum, through their activities the NGO social service providers create a clientelistic relationship with their service users, which they exploit for political purposes. This will be discussed more in chapter 8.

Chapter 7: Disciplining moral behaviour through education and raising awareness

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research questions: What are the main social services, religious, and political activities that they are engaged in? With a focus on the ethical and moral influence through religious education. This is explored through an investigation of the provision of education in the Madares Imam Ali run by al-Mehrab, and the Shi'a rituals mourning session for women conducted by al-Thabat. I argue that teaching Islamic ethics and morals form one of the most important motivations for Shi'a NGOs' social work with the aim of encouraging the wider society to lead their lives in line with the Shi'a doctrine. The focus is mainly directed towards women and female children, which reflects the reality that Shi'a NGOs' key interest is in shaping women's behaviour rather than that of males. I conducted interviews with activists from three Shi'a NGOs: the CDF, al-Mehrab, and al-Thabat in order to shed light on the importance of disciplining moral behaviour. This chapter is organised in the following order. In section 7.2, I explore the significance of religious ethics and morals for these Shi'a NGOs, whilst in section 7.3 the moral and religious influence of the al-Mehrab schools regarding the collective ceremony for Hijab wearing for females or *Sin al-Takleef al-Shari* is explained. In section 7.4 the mourning session rituals for women organised by al-Thabat are examined and the final section provides a chapter summary.

7.2 The significance of religious ethics teaching for the Shi'a NGOs

Ethics occupy a central place in religion, governing individual relations with God and other people. Islam, like other Abrahamic religions, is based on the notion that God, the creator of human beings, has endowed them with the sense, reason, and understanding to worship Him (al-Faruqi, 2003:162). With this belief, human beings have a duty to follow the instructions of the creator as conveyed by His messengers and in the holy books. That is, he has to show his commitment to follow God's will as a religious duty, which in Islam is known as Takleef (responsibility). This implies

that “norms in human conduct” are to be observed (al-Faruqi, 2003:163). The Takleef therefore is “inseparable from religion and are built entirely upon it” (al-Faruqi, 2003:164). In sum, the human being should be aware of his or her religious duty.

In Islam, ethics are tasked with directing humans to organise their relations with each other; their daily behaviour whether in the private or public realm all have to be informed and guided by divine will, for the consequences of their deeds will be judged in the afterlife. The divine order is explained, interpreted, and transformed by religious establishments, religious political parties, religious NGOs and individuals on matters such as: food, dress, entertainment, hygiene, shelter, sex, helping the poor, and voting in elections. Therefore the Shi’a NGOs accept that their work is about convincing their audience to follow the religious order in the right way (al-Sirat al-Mostaqim). In other words, the Shi’a NGOs understand their role as being that of executing the divine instructions wherein one of the most important aspects is the moral one (Rahman, 1966: 243). Consequently, the Islamisation of behaviour that was introduced in chapter 2, is a common strategy pursued by Islamic NGOs, whether they are Sunni or Shi’a. The aim is to integrate religion into personal and public life; in effect, to Islamize both the private and public sphere. This influence is exercised through the Shi’a NGOs social work, which is permeated with faith in terms of objectives, programme choice and outcomes (Sider and Unruh, 2004). In fact, the interviewees from the Shi’a NGOs repeatedly emphasised the importance of moral education as a principle objective that guided their choice of social work programmes. An interviewee from the CDF explains:

SM C2: what we want is to enhance religious values and strengthen behaviour that responds to Islam as a religion. Because we are believers (Motadanineen); we believe that religion has to lead life. There is nothing in life without a rule made by God. What God has asked us to do we have to do it. God leads us to the right path; the path of al-Sirat al-Mostaqim. It is a divine order. The Prophet has said ‘I Have Only Been Sent to Perfect Good Manners’.

Education and awareness raising activities of the Shi'a NGOs are geared towards promoting and advancing Islam in every aspect of life, both private and public. The latter is undertaken by initiating a "total change in a person's beliefs, actions, potential, thoughts, expressions, and everything relating to that person" (Sarwar, 2001: 29). In other words, the NGOs endeavour to deepen people's understanding and practices of Islam. Moreover, the objectives of Islamic social work, such as in education or raising awareness, are not separated from religious goals and should be "lifelong and it should begin at birth, for then the child's mind is a precious jewel, free of all marks or figure" (Levy, 1962:218).

The same interviewee also explains:

SM C2: What we are trying to do is to help people to implement religious principles, to make the latter living realities; to turn words into deeds. We want to turn our religiosity to daily behaviour. We want to make our personal behaviour an example for others to follow. Those who want to understand what Islam is about can see this by looking at our behaviour with ourselves, with others, and with our enemies.

The core concept of teaching and raising awareness is to implant religious knowledge and help Muslims to interpret and act upon the received knowledge in their daily lives. According to Boyle, religious education is about the personification of absorbed information so that people are able to "embody, or possess the words of God within their very beings, where they can physically reproduce it, share it, and refer to it, ideally over the course of their lifetimes" (Boyle, 2006:491). The Shi'a NGOs' religious education and raising awareness activities are directed both at children and adults so to ensure their loyalty to their denomination, the Marja'iyya, and the doctrine of Ahl-al-Bayt. The schools, summer courses, textbooks along with the indoor and outdoor activities run by al-Mehrab schools, for example, all contribute to framing the identity of the children as Shi'a, as they act as conveyors of values and knowledge about religions. As the previous regime had taken control

of government schools, al-Mehrab invested heavily in private schools: Madares. The educators organise different types of activities to state schools, with the aim of teaching the pupils how to commit to Islamic teachings. The focus is particularly on girls, who are instructed in how to preserve their modesty and chastity within the wider framework found in Ahl-al-Bayt. The intentions of the education provision of al-Mehrab will be explained in more detail in the following section.

7.3 Education through Madares: Education in line with Islamic ethics

Education provision forms one of the most important areas for the Shi'a NGOs. The two Shi'a NGOs that were studied for this thesis, al-Mehrab and al-Thabat were established to spread the word of Islam and the Shi'a Twelver doctrine through religious preaching. In this section, it is argued that these NGOs endeavour to shape and discipline pupil behaviour, in particular that of girls. This is motivated by their character as religious orientated NGOs teaching and socializing the next generation into their religious doctrine. al-Mehrab reaches individuals at an early age through their schools. According to Sarwar their aim is to prepare the child to shoulder his or her religious obligations or Takleef successfully from childhood onwards (Sarwar, 2001). A senior manager of al-Mehrab explains the focus on children's education by stating the following:

SM M7: since the child is a seed for the society, the aim of our provision of education is to protect the child. We will not let this seed be taken away by other hands from here or there, we have to put him [including girls] under our supervision, help him with whatever God enables us to provide for him. We educate the child if he needs education. We provide him with courses if he needs courses, and we provide him with material support if he is in need of that. They are [children] entrusted to us and so we have to take care of them. We want to build the personality of the Muslim and enable him⁴³ to shoulder his responsibility towards God, himself, his family, his society and his nation.

⁴³ In Arabic, pronouns have genders and the use of the subjects him and he, referring to males, does not exclude females.

According to al-Mehrab, teaching religious values is a substantial part of education and should begin at an early age so as to enable children to take part in the broader collective responsibility towards their community or Ummah. The transmitted values, ethos, and teachings aim to socialise them into the ideology of the Shi'a. From this angle, building children's personality is a key objective of al-Mehrab education provision. The focus on childhood stems from the vision that "child character can be formed and a standard may be established, which maintains validity throughout his life time" (Heeren, 1976, :38).

From the fieldwork that is reported in this chapter, it will become clear that al-Madares has the aim of training and educating students to translate the knowledge they receive into belief, faith and behaviour that is commensurate with Islamic ethics. The religious disciplinary approach utilised by al-Mehrab works to integrate and socialise children into their faith, religious belief and the traditions of the Shi'a. In this way, al-Madares prepares the child as a carrier and agent for the wider Shi'a denomination by "moulding the ideological orientation of individuals" (Ghidi, 2009: 2). By ideology, Ghidi means the "process of implementation and preservation of beliefs, norms, and values in social life by divergent groups that characterize the individuals' behaviour" (Ghidi, 2009: 2).

In this process of transmitting their ideology, autonomous thinking appears to be absent as the children have to learn and uphold the same common and sacred values that enable them to integrate within their wider denomination. al-Mehrab operate this process by teaching pupils in the schools or Madares to pray, organising wearing Hijab ceremonies for girls who have reached the age of nine, segregating girls from boys and by instructing them in the basics of the Shi'a doctrine.

The motivation behind Shi'a NGO education, as expressed by a number of interviewees from al-Mehrab, is to enable the children to read, write and think in order to protect themselves from the influence of others and to take their

responsibility towards the future state and society. It is therefore geared towards helping them stay on the righteous path of Islam and in particular, deterring them from succumbing to Western cultural assaults, which exist because of Internet and satellite communications. Moreover, it prepares them to take a leading role in state and society. These objectives were put forward by the representatives from Madares al-Imam Ali schools run by al-Mehrab, but before considering the particular provision of these Madares, I provide a brief description of them.

7.3.1 Madares al-Imam Ali

The name Madares was taken from the first Imam in the Shi'a denomination. According to al-Mehrab interviewees, the idea of establishing Madares was proposed by a number of philanthropists who approached their leader, Ammar al-Hakim and asked him to open an Islamic elementary school. The proposal was accepted by him and the first school of Madares al-Imam Ali was established in 2005 with a total intake of 1,200 students, both boys and girls. The funding for the Madares was not specified by the interviewees, but the NGO interviewees did mention that the main sources are donations from dignitaries and generous Muslim donors such as merchants, giving in the form of Khums revenues. The Madares are private schools that are mainly attended by children of the Shi'a middle classes. Children from the poorer classes are less likely to attend these schools because of the cost and those from other denominations are entirely absent. However, orphans with excellent levels of achievement are also given opportunities to study in Imam Ali Schools through fee waivers which are approximately US\$ 1100 -1300 per student per annum.

Madares have permission to deliver education from the Ministry of Education, which is a necessary requirement for a school to operate under the formal state curriculum. The main locations are in the middle and southern parts of Iraq, which are dominated by the Shi'a. The current number is 14, located in 3 provinces, i.e. 10 in Al-Najaf, 2 in Babylon and 2 in Diwanyia, with a total number of 3,500 students. This information is published on the Al-Hakim Foundation website. The Al-Hakim

foundation is the second name of the al-Mehrab foundation; the first name is registered with the United Nations and the website. The teaching in the Madares is based on two components: the first being the state curriculum and the second pertain to al-Mehrab's own teaching. Regarding the former, completing the state curriculum is required in order for students of Madares to be able to move between the state and non-state school, or even to move on to higher education at state universities. However this obligation was not approved by the Madares senior managers who were of the view that since they are private enterprises they should enjoy the freedom to decide what to teach. They explained that they were in the words of the one of the interviewees only 'given permission' by the Ministry of Education to alter the governmental curriculum by 20%.

The Madares educational activities are divided into two types: indoors and outdoors. The former include teaching the governmental curriculum, such as mathematics, sciences, Arabic, English, history and geography, with the textbooks being those officially prescribed in the national curriculum. The outdoor activities organised by al-Madares involve teaching the boys and girls Islamic values, such as praying, fasting and the preservation of dress codes for girls, which are not normally taught in state schools. This section analyses one of the outdoor activities organised in the focal Imam Ali primary school: collective ceremonies for reaching the age of religious responsibility. This is a new and unprecedented kind of delivery by the Shi'a NGOs for girls who reach nine years old. In addition, another outdoor activity for girls in secondary schools is provided, that of drama lessons, which instruct them how to behave towards boys.

7.3.2 Collective ceremonies for reaching the age of religious responsibility: *Sin al-Takleef al-Shari*

al-Mehrab is responsible for organising a new and important activity launched for the first time in Iraq, that of collective ceremonies for girls who reach the age of nine. This is considered to be the age when girls have to shoulder their religious

responsibilities or *Sin al-Takleef al-Sha'rie*. This, according to an interviewee from al-Mehrab, was started by their organisation and subsequently, taken up by a wide range of state and non-state organisations⁴⁴. At this age, according to al-Mehrab, girls become adults, and have to start to act and behave as mature Muslim women. The first action they are instructed to do to manifest this maturity is to wear the Hijab.

al-Mehrab and the Madares jointly organise the al-Takleef al- Sha'rie ceremonies, which are publically announced and attended by the leader of al-Mehrab or his representative. The ceremony is attended by school staff, girls and their mothers, the public including officials from the city council, and dignitaries from different state and non-state organisations. The total number of those present amounts to more than a hundred and they are accommodated in a large, well decorated hall. The ceremony is usually broadcast on the ISCI TV channel satellite. All the unveiled girls that have reached the age of nine are made to wear white or colourful long dresses that cover the head and the whole body. The girls sit during the celebration listening to the speeches of the leader of al-Mehrab or his representative and watch other acts such as poems readings and theatrical plays, as well as anthems, presented by the students. According to one interviewee from al-Mehrab:

SM M9: We give them Chadors (type of Islamic Hijab) as gifts from our organisation. The girls love to wear al-Hijab; they are white clothes, they look like brides. The girls participate in poetry, reading and some acting.

The ceremony starts with the president of al-Mehrab, Ammar al-Hakim or his deputy, explaining to the audience the importance of the ceremony, which is to watch over their girls' behaviour from now on since they have reached the age of nine. An interviewee reported the following regarding this:

⁴⁴ Al-Mehrab was the first in organising these ceremonies and then other Shi'a organisation followed its steps, and more recently, the governorates of Basrah city and Baghdad have held similar ceremonies.

SM M9: the speeches are directed at both girls and their mothers alike. We explain to the mothers that once their girls wear Hijab they have to watch over their religious behaviour as they have become adult women. We ask them that to take their girls behaviour seriously and not to be too relaxed when it comes to religious obligations. For example, mothers have to watch that they pray, fast and wear their Hijab in the proper way.

Another interviewee from al-Mehrab states:

SM M3: The reason we do these ceremonies is because sometimes families are unaware or ignore the importance of this age for wearing Hijab. So by organising these events we draw their attention to the divine order. As you know we are subjected to cultural invasions which we consider more dangerous than military occupation. We have to protect our girls and boys alike, but our focus is on girls because they are more emotional and need extra attention than boys. This is because Islam wants to protect girls and women. Hijab protects girls and women like diamonds. Some accuse Islam of hostility towards women. On the contrary, Islam respects women. That is why we protect them. An unveiled woman is like a commodity that invites all eyes to look at her. Women, to be protected, have to be veiled.

al-Mehrab interviewees described the reaction of the families to such an event as one of enthusiasm. In the words of an interviewee of al-Mehrab:

SM M9: Mothers of the girls who are to wear Hijab feel very happy when they come here and the girls loved it a lot. The girls feel very excited to wear nice white clothes.

By organising these ceremonies, al-Mehrab serves three connected objectives. First, acting upon the notion that shaping adult behaviour has to start at an early age. That is, Sin al-Takleef al-Sha'rie is geared towards creating a generation that acts in line with the rules of Islam as interpreted by al-Mehrab. In Islamic thought parents

shoulder the responsibility to teach their children, because the family in the Islamic context is the first place where Muslims receive their religious pedagogy. Parents not only have to guide and direct their female children to wear Hijab, pray and fast, but also to abide by a wide set of Muslim behaviour, including visiting the Imams' shrines, becoming engaged in social work and even performing Hajj (Abdul Bari, 2002; 64).

The second objective is that al-Mehrab can also influence families through educating and raising parents' awareness about their religious duties and bringing their attention to their responsibilities towards their female children. The parents are advised by al-Hakim to observe and watch over their daughters' behaviour, for covering the hair, and the modesty of today's behaviour in clothes, in Husain's words "is connected to the judgment in the afterlife" (Husain, 2004:273). That is, families are told to watch for their daughter's Hijab since in Islam allowing hair to be seen in public is a sinful act. (Husain, 2004: 266). From this it can be seen that, Sin al-Takleef al- Sha'rie is not simply about taking parental responsibility in shaping the female children's dress code and beliefs, but also pertains to bringing their parents under the influence of the vision of al-Mehrab.

The third objective is bringing the wider community to listen to the leader of al-Mehrab who is also a political leader linked to a party that occupies both ministerial and legislative posts. Consequently, those attending the ceremonies are listening to the vision of an Islamic party on a wide range of issues related to society and Islam. In Iraq the age of maturity is 18 years old, however al-Mehrab through Sin al-Taqleefal- Sha'rie proposes the age of nine as the age of maturity for girls. Thus, while influencing children and their families, sin al-Takleef al- Sha'rie is also sacralising wider society in line with the Shi'a doctrine. Consequently, it is not surprising that the one of the Shi'a political group, al-Fadhila party before the elections of April 2014, proposed al-Jafari law, following the jurisprudence of the "the sixth Shi'ite imam Ja'afar al-Sadiq, who founded his own school of jurisprudence (Shi'ite)" (Zangana, 2014). This law is directed only to the Shi'a, and it is to deal with issues of marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption (Al-Ghazi,

2014). More specifically, the proposed Ja'fari bill aims "to decrease the legal marrying age from 18 to nine for females and 18 to 15 for males"⁴⁵.

As mentioned above, during the ceremony poems are read and some acts presented and these are to show the importance of wearing Hijab as well as acting as a good Muslim. The poems express admiration for girls who wear Hijab because real Muslims should follow the lead of the Prophet's daughter and the Lady Zainab, his granddaughter as a model symbolising perfect Muslim behaviour for women. At the same time, al-Mehrab leaders criticise those unveiled as "westernised; lacking religious morals; feeling no shame for showing their bodies to boys; and being committed a sin'", according to a booklet distributed about Sin al-Takleef al-Sha'rie.

Sin al-Takleef al- Sha'rie is taught also during summer courses that are organized by al-Mehrab schools in a class that is specified as teaching Shi'a doctrine in which a textbook called Fiqhona is distributed to the girls. It confirms that by reaching the age of nine, God will talk to girls as women directly and that they must listen and follow His instruction to do the right thing and avoid any wrongdoing. Moreover it tells them what this right behaviour is that she needs to adhere to now that she has become a mature woman. These obligatory duties cover the following areas: praying; fasting; paying Khums and Zakat and helping the poor; Sadaqqa and Kafalat al-Yateem (religious donations and sponsorship; avoiding any wrongdoing such as theft, backbiting, unveiling, adornments; avoidance of the delay of marriage, not to ask for an expensive dowry, not to shake hands with Mahram men, avoid looking at men apart from their heads and hands and without any sexual attraction and to visit female doctors instead of male ones. The textbook allocated for girls to study is a beautifully written, colourful and designed with Islamic illuminated manuscripts, full of quotes from the Quran and Imam's Hadith, the talks of Imams including many pictures of girls wearing white clothes and white Hijab sitting on their own or with other girls listening to a mother who acts as a teacher. The textbook is written in a story telling format, namely a conversation between a girl and her mother, where

⁴⁵http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/iraqis_new_personal_status_jafari_law_is_sectarian.pdf

the girl poses questions and the mother answers. Each question forms a topic for discussion and teaching that al-Mehrab is keen to teach girls at the age of nine.

During the summer courses, the right morals are also taught in a class specifically dedicated to this and a textbook is also allocated to teach this issue, which advises pupils to adhere to their moral obligations. The class and textbook advise young Muslims to observe the following in their life: to believe in the oneness of God, to worship him, to sacrifice themselves for his sake, and to follow the Imams' instructions. In addition, they are told how to: shoulder their responsibilities; control their personal behaviour; raise their self discipline; and how to control sexual feelings in the righteous way. It warns children against loving this earthly life at the expense of the afterlife; not to be a slave to money, fame, or power; to avoid forbidden relations; and to avoid alcohol. It instructs them to sympathise with the poor and to feel the pain of hungry people. This list of religious instructions, containing advice and warnings for wrong doing, are all guided by Islamic ethics as interpreted by al-Mehrab.

This intention of influencing the religiosity of girls' behaviour continues into secondary schools. Given that girls are all veiled at this stage, the focus of al-Mehrab moves on to another concern that they feel they need to address, which is to control the emotional and sexual feelings of these girls. This is carried out also during outdoor activities and is the focus of the next subsection.

7.3.3 Self disciplining of emotional and sexual behaviour for secondary school female teenagers

Secondary schools attended by girls and boys aged from 13-18 years old are segregated. This age range, according to an interviewee of al-Mehrab, is a critical age because it is when the personality of the human being is shaped. One of the outdoor activities organised by the Madares Imam Ali is drama for girls. The manager of a Madrasah explained in her interview that they organise theatre cast by and for girls at the intermediate and secondary levels in order to teach them

how to protect themselves from any forbidden contact with males who are not their family members. The theatrical plays warn them about the immoral intentions of boys or men alerting them to their devilish desires and teaching them not to trust or expose themselves to them since this will damage their family's name and honour. One staff member of the Madares states the following:

SM M10: In secondary schools, we teach girls how to keep their dignity and chastity and how to protect themselves from the influences of Western values that bombard us through satellite and websites. The girls play the roles of boys. We show the girls what kind of tricks the boys use and how they should be aware of these tricks, and not to fall for them.

It is considered crucial in the Islamic context to "channel and control sexuality through gender segregation" (Beckman, 2010:620), because the notion of boyfriend and girlfriend does not exist, at least publicly. As a result, in the Islamic way of life, attraction to the opposite sex is organised and legalised in "lawful marriage that satisfies sexual, emotional and social needs" (Abdul Bari, 2002: 8). The control of sexuality, which is perceived to "be an ambivalent force, dangerous" (Beckman, 2010:619), is one of the most important motivations for the moral education of girls in Shi'a NGO schools.

According to the manager of the Madares, families are content to receive this kind of education as it provides the parents with assurances that the schools are playing a complementary role in teaching the girls how to behave in a moral way. In fact, this was put forward as the reason why many families are willing to register their daughters in these schools in preference to governmental ones. The staff member clarifies this as:

SM M10: The families in Najaf are willing to register their children in our schools, because we focus on two aspects: education and Tarbaia (pedagogy). In fact we consider that pedagogy is more important than education: we teach children the right behaviour. If we do not pay attention

to Tarbya, education will suffer. The parents feel confident to send their children to us because they know we have a proper surveillance system in place.

The staff in Madares receive regular training from al-Mehrab. According to the manager of one Madrasah this training is “to ensure that staff work in line with Islam”⁴⁶ and are motivated to do so for religious and/or economic reasons. In an interview with a local newspaper in Najaf, a teacher at a Madres explained how she felt about working with Madares Imam Ali: “it is enough for me, that the Madares carries the name of Imam Ali to work even for less salary”. However the job opportunities that these schools provide might be another reason given the high level of unemployment in the country.

From the above, the education of girls and the outdoor activities, supported by summer courses, provide evidence that the choice of Shi’a NGOs programmes and the expected outcomes are permeated with the religious objectives of shaping and policing the female children’s behaviour, beliefs and actions in line with their vision of Islam. Furthermore, al-Mehrab aims through the school outdoor activities to engage and bring families and the wider society to sit and listen to their religious discourse. Following the analysis of al-Mehrab’s objectives in disciplining female children’s behaviour, guiding their families, and influencing the wider society. I will focus next on al-Thabat’s religious role through conducting the Shi’a rituals of Imam Hussain mourning sessions.

7.4 al-Thabat’s disciplinary role through mourning sessions of Majalis al-Hussain

This section explains the utilisation of the Shi’a rituals to influence individuals, in particular women, morally and shaping the values of the wider society in line with the Shi’a doctrine. The reason for focusing on these rituals stems from the fact they are conducted widely across Iraq and thus provide insights into phenomena that influences much of the Shi’a population. The rituals are practices that have been

⁴⁶ A comment made in an article about Imam Ali schools.
http://www.burathanews.com/news_article_142693.html. [cited on 23-09-2013]

taking place freely and openly since the changes in the country post 2003, came into being when, according to interviews with the CDF, a number of Shi'a NGOs were formed as organisational frames for practising them. They are very significant for the Shi'a and today are organised not only by NGOs, but also by the state and more affluent Shi'a pious individuals. The extensive practising of these rituals is symbolic of the Shi'a revival in recent years, and represents in Tugal's words a "process by which the religious ritual comes to occupy a greater place in every day life" (Tugal, 2006: 252). al-Thabat is an NGO run by educated middle class Shi'a women and has the aim of spreading the word of the Shi'a through organising the rituals, before they became aware of NGOs as new form of 'civil society organisations'. They began practising the religious rituals once the political climate allowed them to do so, because the previous regime had heavily restricted the Shi'a so they could not be used as cover for political activities (Batatu, 2004).

Before analysing the Shi'a rituals as practised by al-Thabat, they are defined and the impact of their outcomes is explained. Perllerin and Edmond define a ritual as "a behaviour that is repeated in a precise order and frequently involves performing an action to the body or mind to fulfil a religious obligation" (Perllerin and Edmond 2013, e 948-e9454). Further, it is understood as an activity in which both physical and spiritual aspects of religion come together. Religious rituals are part of any religion and the outcomes of practising religious rituals varies, because they "*serve numerous purposes...communicate; teach; socialise; instil gender beliefs...create sacred spheres; sacralise; build relationships; produce social order and bonds; organise; control or oppress...*" (Hoffmann, 2012: 3). In general, they aim to make change in the participants who take part in them by acting as a medium (Feuchtwang, 2007) to influence people's behaviour. This involves, according to Schubel "*an external change of status, but it also may involve an internal, invisible change of state or perhaps a reconfirmation of a condition that is expected but not fully experienced or articulated*" (Schubel, 1993:3). They also create feelings of solidarity amongst those who practise them through "acts of corporate devotion" (Schubel, 1993:2) and they are loci where the person might be more informed about his or her own religion (Schubel, 1993:3).

With regards to Islam, Tugal explained that rituals serve the objective of strengthening Islamic culture by using religious language, and symbols (Tugal, 2006: 252). The outcome of practising them is to Islamize the behaviour of Muslims, whereby the participants will hear lectures about such matters as Islamic history and ethics and thus become better informed about the nature of their faith (Schubel, 1993:5). The intended outcomes from participation in al-Majalis is to bring the Shi'a, as expressed repeatedly by the interviewees, "closer to God" and in Schubel words, it "allows participants to manifest solidarity with the Prophet and his family and thus with the Shi'a community –for them the 'true Islam'" (Schubel, 1993:6).

al-Majalis is a plural Arabic word meaning assemblies, which take the form of religious congregations "where Shi'is gather to listen to a sermon and lament the events of Karbala" (Szanto Ali - Dib, 2012: 37). In other words, they are organised to remember the murder of the Shi'a third Imam al-Hussain and his companions who were killed in Karbala in Iraq in the first month of the Islamic calendar (Muharram in 680) by the Umayyad Muslim caliph: Yazid. Since the murdering of Hussain and his companions, the Shi'a commemorate their deaths every year in Muharram. Remembering the events of Muharram across fourteen centuries is an opportunity to remind them about the struggle against the abuse of power by their oppressors. In the commemoration of the murder of Hussain, hundreds of events are held every year including: carnivals; passion plays, poetry readings, speeches, and discussions in different parts of the world. Muharram represents a "spiritual awakening, strengthening of faith by condensing and intensifying religious events, unifying and empowering the Shia identity" (Elbadri, 2009: v). It also forms a venue wherein the Shi'a are urged to enact higher moral standards (Howarth.2005:134), as advocated by the preachers, speakers in mosques, in Hussainaia, and in private houses.

al-Majalis have been considered by al-Shirazi (1926) as important venues that are like schools that provide religious knowledge to the public. The Majalis of Muharram are not only commemorations of intense sorrow but also provide

opportunities for the Shi'a to launch annual educational campaigns introducing and aiming to convince other Shi'a and even non-Shi'a about the historical role played by Imam Hussain in defending justice. As such, a Majli is considered to be a "complete university" (Howarth, 2005:136) where education and preaching intensively work together. al-Shirazi (1926) explains in his book *Lyali Peshawar* (the Nights of Pishawar) "the benefits of the al-Hussainaia Majalis" as follows:

"These Majalis are like schools; the speakers [preachers, or Mullaya] deliver lectures about religious instruction; the history of Islam; the history of prophets and their nations; they explain and interpret the Quran; raise the issue of oneness; they show the divine justice; they explain Prophecy and the Imamate; and the final day. They also explain what is expected from the believers; they show the attendees the impact of bad deeds; they compare Islam with other religions, and approve with evidence the superiority of Islam over other religions" (al-Shirazi, 1926)⁴⁷.

The Majalis al-Hussain are the most important carnivalesque events that allow the Shi'a to work intensively to introduce their interpretation of the Quran, the Imamate, their historical oppression and their identification of the enemies of Islam. In practising these rituals, the Shi'a express their loyalty, love, and cling to Ahl-al-Bayt, the family of Mohammad. The love of Ahl-al-Bayt or (Hub Ahl-al-Bayt) demands that Shi'a Muslims follow the instructions of their Marja'iyya whether this relates to personal or public matters including helping the poor, caring for each other and having modest personal behaviour. They even promote the notion that to ensure these values are upheld they should make political choices in line them, i.e. they should follow the stance of al-Marja'iyya. Those running Majalis al-Hussain utilise the Shi'a martyrs Imam Ali, and Imam al-Hussain as well as the Shi'a virtue women, Fatima, the wife of Ali and Zainab his daughter and the sister of Hussain, as role models for the lay Shi'a to follow. The devotion to Ahl-al-Bayt and emulation of

⁴⁷ The article is cited on <http://www.al-shia.org/html/ara/others/index.php?mod=maqalat&id=94>, but the name of the author is not mentioned. Accessed on [06-10-2013].

their exemplary figures contribute to the discipline and morality of individuals as well as to enhancing Shi'a community cohesion.

Karbala city in Iraq hosts around two million people of the Shi'a faithful every year who come to remember the death of Hussain (Pierre, et al., 2007). It marks the place where the Shi'a Imams lived and were buried in 650 when Imam Ali, the cousin of Mohammad was killed and then his sons buried in Karbala and a number of other Imams were buried in Iraq until the Twelver Imam went into hiding in Samarra city, north of Baghdad. For the Shi'a, the rituals serve to meet significant objectives, in particular, consolidating theologically their identity, through disciplining individual behaviours, with women being considered an important group for achieving this aim. Given the focus of this chapter, the next subsection's analysis concentrates on how the rituals are utilised to inform adult women about personal behaviour through a description of the process.

7.4.1 Accessing the site of women Shi'a rituals organised by al-Thabat

al-Majalis normally take place only during Muharram (the first month of Islamic calendar), however, this was not considered enough for Shi'a NGOs, such as al-Thabat, as they believe that limiting the rituals to only a month a year has led to the notion that the "Shi'i neglect their religious duties throughout the majority of the year and then attempt to make up for them during Ashura⁴⁸" (Schubel, 1993:89). Before 2003, al-Majalis were permitted for both men and women, but they were usually watched by the state's agents and were allowed only during Muharram. However, nowadays al-Thabat organises them all year long and as was explained by the interviewees from al-Thabat, they are the place where women come to listen to a Mullaya (female preacher). The women listen to the Mullaya talking about the tragedy of Hussain, his companion and his family. The feelings of sorrow expressed by those attending are a sign of their love for al-Hussain and his family, for which the Shi'a believe they will be rewarded both during life and in the after life. These

⁴⁸ Ashura is the first 10 days of Muharram, whereby the Shi'a Imam, the grandsons of Mohammad were killed in Iraq.

rewards are said to come through the Shafa'ah (intercession) of the Imams, whose spirits are believed to still be alive, and hence are present to help women who share their sadness about the Imams' fate. The term intercession refers to the belief that the Imams will act on behalf of these women to ask God to help them reach their destinies. Consequently, al-Majalis are framed to be places where women can ask for the intercession of the Imams so as to achieve this goal. In addition, by attending the mourning session Shi'a women believe that God will forgive them for their lapses (Schubel, 1993:6).

When I entered al-Thabat's office, based in an al-Hussainaia, a big billboard was hanging on the wall with this exhortation to Muslim women: "Zainab has led her revolution by supporting Hussain in Karbala, and you, Muslim women, do your revolution against Sofoor (the unveiling)". The images, symbols, and example of the two Shi'a virtue ladies were consistently used to show the women attending the Majalis how they should act and behave. The emulation of the example of these Shi'a ladies involves a wide list of actions that modern Iraqi Shi'a women are advised to apply, including: watching their make up, veiling, not committing adultery, not to ask their husbands for expensive clothes or furniture, standing firmly beside their husband, watching over their daughters' behavior, taking care of their children needs, and voting in elections. An interviewee from al-Thabat explains the importance of al-Majalis to women:

SM T1: We have lived under economic sanctions. This has destroyed society financially and morally; it has impacted on the ethics of the people. Thus we have to focus on the religious education because we believe religion means morality. In our Majalis many women attend and the Mullaya (female preacher) can be heard widely in our Hussainaia. We do not talk only about Hussain, peace be upon his name, but about the problems in the society. The Mullaya always links her speech about Karbala, back to our problems now. This is for us so we can learn lessons from our martyrs, peace be upon them.

Another member of the organisation explains:

SM T2: In our Majalis we advise women and young girls. We do not talk about politics unless there are pressing issues that force us to talk about them. The *Mullaya* talks about good morals because families need to embed religion and its morals in their behaviour. Good morals help us to live with each other. This means that the wife knows how to take care of her husband, to take care of her boys. Morals mean for us how we act within the family, in society, and it governs our relationship with God. Those who want to become closer to God have to enjoy good morals; they should follow the example of our Prophet and our lady Zainab and follow her path.

al-Thabat organises *al-Majalis* two days a week all year long. The gatherings usually assemble in al-Thabat's Hussainaia, which is similar to a mosque. al-Thabat organises the event, providing space, a preacher, inviting women, hosting the attendees, and also utilising the whole event to disseminate their religious message to women in the session; the attendees of al-Majalis, on the other hand, have multiple roles in conducting these mourning sessions; they act as donors, propagators, audience, serving the sermons, and most importantly as listeners and learners for the experience that told in Majalis by the preacher or *Mullaya*. Women participating in the Majalis show their devotion through their financial contribution towards the costs of Majalis and the fees of Mullaya which amounts sometimes to \$200 for each session. The sessions last approximately 30 minutes. The educational level of the attendees, according to al-Thabat, ranges from elementary to higher education.

al-Mullaya, as a preacher, has a central role in al-Majalis, for she leads the mourning chants "in remembrance of the Ahl-al-Bayt" (Szanto Ali-Dib, 2012: 215). During al-Majalis, she is the only speaker/actor/ lecturer/poet/show-woman thus getting all the attention (Scuble, 1993:106). She talks about the past history of the Shi'a Imams and their tragedies, as well as linking the past experience with the current one. Consequently, she has to have a number of qualifications. First of all she has to be

either graduated from the Hawza (a religious academy for Shi'a that is located in Najaf city) or considered to have sufficient religious knowledge about Shi'a doctrine. In addition, she is expected to have the ability to deliver public speeches and have a good voice as she needs to read poems with musical rhythm and make clear recitations.

The Majalis setting is "a teaching mood" (Howarth, 2005:135) with the gathered women sitting on the floor beside one another, and al-Mullaya standing in front of them introducing her session. She acts as an instructor and uses a black notebook, which contains hand written poems about the tragedies of Hussain. In her speech she explains the morals of Hussain, his values, bravery, praises his faith and his readiness to sacrifice his soul for his religion. She usually reads the poems with a sad rhythm tapping on her black book, and her voice rises and cracks in grief (Hegland, 2003). The stories told in the session portray details of the battles of Muharram, the role of Zainab in supporting her brother, featuring the bravery, the heroism, and self sacrifice of the Shi'a (Al-Haydari, 1999: 97). An interviewee with a woman who attends al-Majalis organised by al-Thabat on a regular basis presents her account of these happenings:

SU T3: al-Mullaya greets our Imams, God bless them all, one by one. She speaks about those who passed away sacrificing their life for Ahl-al-Bayt. al-Mullaya tries to present her speech in a way that can touch the feelings of women. She emphasises Hussain's heroic stands, his human stand towards others; the brutality of his enemies. She explains that al-Hussain was defending the poor and the oppressed and defended his grandfather's religion [Mohammad]. She then talks to the women, advising them to observe their roles as wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters. For example, she might talk about family problems emphasising the role of the real Muslim woman's duty in observing her family needs, obeying her husband, looking after her girls and making sure that they are veiled, and act in a proper way.

An interviewee from al-Thabat explains the role of Fatima as follows:

SM T1: al-Mullaya's speech always refers to the experience and quotes from Zainab and Fatima so women can learn from our ladies as a role model in their daily life. *al-Mullaya* speaks about Zainab's suffering, reminding women how she made sacrifices beside her brother and endured a difficult life. When Imam Ali was denied political power [after the death of Muhammad], Fatima, peace be upon her name, went to a mosque and gave a speech defending her husband's right to govern the Ummah. She was with Muslims in the war field playing an active role teaching and delivering pedagogy.

Fatima and Zainab provide a powerful image of how Shi'a woman should act; they are seen as "role models for women's loyalty to men (Rahimi, 2007:223). Women are educated to have an active role in maintaining and observing their role in the family and the community, which serves as both a religious duty and a social positioning, because a wife needs to support her husband, in particular, in his duty to protect Islamic values. This role for women is considered in Hiba Izzat Rau's book (1995) as a political responsibility, which includes a wide range of duties, at the heart of which is ensuring that their behavior is in line with Islam.

Another interviewee from al-Thabat explains:

SM T2: We ask al-Mullaya to talk about any inappropriate behaviour that we become aware of. For example, not wearing Hijab, committing immoral behaviours, such as adultery and she warns women of the severe consequences if they perform these deeds. Sometimes, because girls are better educated than their mothers, the mothers lose their authority over their daughters and the daughters end up controlling their mothers. So we educate women in these sessions. If a mother has a son who is an addict she might hear from us something that helps her and helps her son; a mother who allows her daughter to go out unveiled is warned that veiling is a

religious duty and is important to protect her daughter from bad men who would harass her in the streets if she goes out without Hijab. Whatever subject the al-*Mullaya* talks about, she will link it back to religion. so... can you see how religion has a say in every aspect of our life?

The intention to deepen women's religiosity was further elucidated by one of al-Thabat service users:

SU T3: al-Mullaya stresses how women should observe their chastity, not to wear make up and go out of her house, not to gossip against one another, not to be demanding of their husbands, and observe that their clothes and Hijab as required by Islam.

The outcome of raising awareness of women participants in al-Majalis is that first of all, women wear Hijab and so do their daughters. This is perceived as a clear expression of religious commitment and devotion to Islam. The intention of the aforementioned billboard in al-Thabat's Hussainaia is to remind Shi'a women that the 'revolution' of Karbala in 680 against the tyranny of Yazid is interpreted today as a committed stance against Sofoor, which means unveiling. Second, women should control their sexuality and refrain from both premarital or extramarital relationships as these are considered sins and crimes. Obedience to these conditions, in addition to the regular religious duties, such as prayer, fasting, and not gossiping as well as visiting the Shi'a shrines, were mentioned by the interviewees as religious duties that women have to adhere to in order to receive and secure the intercession of the Imams. I was also told by them that sometimes women feel guilty if they face problems, seeing it as a punishment from the Imam, because they have done something wrong. In sum, women are obliged to commit to high standards of religious morals that measure up to those of the virtuous ladies Zainab and Fatima, if they want to receive their Imam's expressions of pleasure and satisfaction.

al-Thabat's intention is to permeate their audience's choices with religious meaning, instilling faith and informing their practice from the Shi'a NGO's point of

view so as to bring them closer to God. Consequently al-Majalis sessions are loaded with religious significance, with obedience and the commitment to its ethical, moral and values, performing a central pillar. The knowledge received during the rituals has to be fed back into the daily lives of the women so that their behaviour is in line with the discourse of the Shi'a obligations towards Ahl-al-Bayt values. In taking part in al-Majalis, it is expected that the religiosity of the participants will be enhanced as the pious Shi'a present themselves "before the holy family and offer obedience to them" (Schubel, 1993:113). Thus, it can be seen that the utilisation of rituals, in Tugal's words, "is one of the mechanisms that is used by Islamists in their function in everyday life...and they are integral to the workings of power and to Islamist popularity" (Tugal, 2006: 249). Through this religious advocacy it is hoped that a "scared community" will be created which adheres to Ahl-Al-Bayt teaching and values.

These sessions bring women together away from their ordinary housework to meet other women from the same or other suburbs to socialise, to exchange their experiences, to think beyond their normal and daily life about its meaning as well as to give them an identity, sense of belonging, and a cause. Women who fund these Majalis are expecting practical results. For example, a wife hoping to have a child, a mother waiting for her son to come back home safe or a young woman looking for a husband. As such, these sessions provide them with solace and comfort, which spurs them to adhere to Islamic ethics and values highlighted in al-Majalis. This intention of the Shi'a women NGOs of implanting a discipline in both individuals and the collective community (Pinault, 1999: 4), contributes to making women important agents for enhancing the patriarchal system, wherein they are beseeched to be loyal to both family and their religious community. Hegland explained in her research about Shi'a women mourning sessions in Pakistan, that their "crucial and unique ritual role advances Shi'a identity...serving the interests of their beleaguered Shi'a community, and women's deep devotion to their community" (Hegland, 2003: 413). In this way, lay Shi'a women and Shi'a NGOs have become agents of patriarchal control themselves (ibid: 414). The women in Shi'a NGOs promote Hijab, which is one of the most important signs of Islamic ideology, as well as by

enhancing the segregation based on gender, are evidence of the patriarchal culture that these NGOs promote. The intervention in women dress; makes up; as well as choosing female doctors over male, and warn female children and teenagers are all forms of patriarchal control that these NGOs practice. The notion of women role in serving the husband and children and watching over her daughter behaviour are all advocated by Shi'a NGOs, including women's ones.

This shows that the aim of the Shi'a NGOs is to turn Shi'a women into active implementers of these theological ethics in society at large. Thus, in the final account, women, whether individuals or as members of modern NGOs, provide a crucial contribution to Islamic ethical construction.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided analysis of two kinds of provision of Shi'a NGOs, that is, al-Mehrab's education provision through the private schooling of al-Madares, and al-Thabat's provision of Shi'a rituals for women. The former represent the Activist trend, and the second represent the Quietist trend. Both trends NGOs share the intention in creating secularised community. Thus, the first key finding of this chapter is that the Shi'a NGOs' provision is permeated with religious objectives aimed at shaping individual behaviour, especially that of female children and women. The focus on women stems from the NGOs' vision that women need protection, and that enforcing strict norms from an early age will assist in protecting them from such things as Western culture and male bad behaviour as well as help them to control their sexuality. The focus on children in the Madares stems from their conviction that what children learn in their childhood will remain with them the rest of their life. The second key finding of this chapter is that Shi'a NGOs, such as al-Mehrab, endeavour through organising Sin al-Takleef al-Sha'rie for female children, not only to dictate the children's choice of dress as well as sacralising their daily behaviour, but also to influence their families choices and to disseminate their vision to the wider community that Islamic teaching must be followed as a way of life.

The experience of al-Thabat, through organising the rituals of al-Hussain mourning sessions, shows the power of utilising such ceremonies to enhance the religious order. These are sessions aimed at women attending and participating in Majalis to transfer the knowledge they receive into their daily life. This is achieved by the participants being told of the importance of their loyalty to the Shi'a Imams, by emulating the Shi'a virtue women's example in observing chastity and modesty, as well as the essential acts of being faithful to their husband, family and their denomination. They are also informed that such loyalty will be rewarded if they need the intercession of the Imams to help them deal with any problems they face. Thus, it is concluded that the Shi'a NGOs' choice of programmes is imbued with faith and the outcomes of these activities serve to make the Shi'a, in particular women and girls, agents of a sacred society in which Shi'a values and ethics dominate. Moreover, sacralising individual behaviour of children and families from the middle class is not void of political influence. That is, the women have been asked to interpret their religiosity and devotion to their Imams as well as emulation to al-Marja'iyya in a political manner, particularly during election times, owing to the post war increased sectarian division between the two main Moslem sects. This influencing of poor families and women from the middle class by NGOs is aimed at wider society, under the belief that educating children to build the future Shi'a state is an important mission.

The ethical and moral theological influence of the Shi'a NGOs revealed in this chapter mirrors David and Robinson's (2012) contention that the role of religious NGOs is that of endeavouring to disciplining individual personal behaviour by bringing it into line with religion. As with welfare assistance, although the two focal NGOs belong to the Activist and Quietist trends, there would appear to be little difference in their overall goal, which is the sacralising of Iraqi society; while al-Mehrab uses formal education to spread their word through its Madares, the Quietist utilised moral informal approach by utilising the religious rituals of al-Majalis to inform women's choice and way of life..

Chapter 8: Shi'a NGOs political role in promoting the Shi'a led state

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to another aspect of the Shi'a NGOs' activities, i.e. their role at the political level. The strategies that they have utilised to influence their constituency are discussed. These include their engagement in mobilising people for the elections, and voting for the new constitution; promoting the new Shi'a led state; and preparing a new generation to lead the future state in Iraq. The role of the Shi'a NGOs in promoting the role of al-Marja'iyya will be also evident in the discussion of the above three strategies. The political influence of these Shi'a NGOs is examined through considering the activities of: al-Mehrab, al-Thabat, and the CDF. To understand the political role of the Shia NGOs, in particular, during the post war election period and in empowering the role of the state, it is important to highlight two underlying circumstances: the sectarian environment following the war on Iraq and the importance of the Shi'a religious establishment in leading the Shi'a denomination.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 8.2 focuses on al-Marja'iyya's role in the Shi'a denomination. Section 8.3 discusses the Activists role in the elections, i.e. the case of al-Mehrab's engagement in the first post war elections and voting for the new constitution, whereas section 8.4 considers the Quietist role in the elections, i.e. the efforts made by the CDF and al-Thabat to empower the state, in particular, by the former. Section 8.5 explains the Shi'a NGOs electoral campaign discourse for political mobilisation, whilst section 8.6 discusses the voting for the new constitution. Section 8.7 considers the Shi'a NGOs' role in making citizens that respect the state and section 8.8 explains how some have put themselves forward as the fifth authority of the state. Section 8.9 covers the Shi'a NGOs' strategic planning aimed at protecting the future of the Shi'a-led state, with the focus being on the utilisation of education to create a new generation for the future Islamic state through al-Madares by al-Mehrab. Finally, there is the chapter summary.

8.2 The leading role of al-Marja'iyya in the elections in Iraq

It is necessary to understand the role of the Shi'a religious establishment or al-Marja'iyya in guiding the Shi'a denomination's affairs when the opportunity arose for them to consolidate their political power. al-Marja'iyya countenanced the Shi'a about the importance of holding the elections and taking part in voting and provided the impetus for Shi'a NGOs to carry out their political role. al-Marja'iyya gained its prominence as an institution after the disappearance of last Imam al-Mahdi in 961 (Kelidar, 1983). In other words, it was in existence well before the establishment of the modern state in Iraq in 1921. al-Marja, as a person is considered by the Shi'a as a point of reference to guide them in different aspects of their affairs: socially, religiously and politically. He holds an authoritative position not only for his followers or emulators in Iraq, but for Shi'a all over the world. This authoritative position is acquired through three qualifications comprising "ijtihad, i.e. 'ilm (knowledge of the law and the issuing of new ones), 'adl (justice in the practice of law) and wara (piety)" (Litvak, 1998: 15). According to his religious knowledge, the Marja has *ijtihad*, i.e. the ability to interpret and make religious edicts and to issue Fatwa (legal judgments). The role of al-Marja is to pass new laws, guide, make edicts as well as pass legal judgments or *fatwa* for emergent issues that the Shi'a have not had to face before. Since al-Marja'iyya were perceived to have the capacity to understand and pass religious laws, those without "specialised religious knowledge were expected to submit to his judgment" (Walbridge, 2001: 4). That is, lay Shi'a, women and men follow al-Marja⁴⁹, and since there are a number of them⁵⁰ both inside Iraq and outside Iraq, they are free to choose the one that they want to emulate or follow, which is called al-Taqlid. The Shi'a

⁴⁹ al-Marja refers to the clergyman as individual; al-Marja'iyya refers to his institution as a network of religious activities and religious education, such as running al-Hawza, a school for Shi'a doctrine teaching.

⁵⁰ The other three Marja'iyya based in Iraq, in addition to al-Sistani born on August 4, 1930, in the north-eastern Iranian city of Mashhad (Rahimi, 2007: 4), are: "Sayid Mohammad Said Hakim, grandson of Sayid Mohsen Hakim (born in Najaf, 1935), Muhammad Ishaq Fayyadh (born in Qaznei, Afghanistan, 1929), and Bashir Najafi (born in Jalandhar, India, 1942). None of them have Sistani's popularity and financial network" (Khalaji, 2006). Moreover "in fact there is little the other leading figures can do or say in contrast to him[al-Sistani].. as.. it would be rare and unusual for the other three main clerical leaders to follow an independent political line or to engage more directly in party politics. The marja'iyya in Najaf works as a collective run by Sistani" (Rizvi, 2010: 1307)

considers the execution of a Fatwa as a religious duty, which they are committed to. As such, the Marja'iyya, in Sakai's words, is "the most systematized leadership... which may decide the political direction of the whole community" (Sakai, 2001: 42). Consequently, al-Taqlid, or emulation, is an important tradition for the Shi'a and forms a powerful link that is available only in their denomination as it does not exist within the Sunni sect. Thus, if al-Marja'iyya is politicised, it can be very influential and "can be an alternative or even a rival for a political party" (Sakai, 2001: 42). al-Sistani, without associating himself with any particular political party, advocated for a wider coalition of Shi'a political groups and individuals to form an overarching united alliance to contest the elections in 2005. This was in order to increase the likelihood of the Shi'a denomination political groups winning the elections, which emanated from the fear that "intra-Shia divisions would give the Sunnis a path back to power" (Dawisha, 2010: 34). In fact, al-Sistani is believed to have played a direct part in the formation of the coalition of the Shi'a political parties that stood for election at that time (Rizvi, 2010).

The most powerful mobiliser for the Shi'a from both the Activist and Quietist sides to convince their constituencies to vote was the Fatwa issued by al-Sistani stating that voting for the Shi'a bloc was an obligatory duty for every Shi'a man and woman. The Fatwa emphasised "the virtue of participation in the elections and advised Shiites to vote for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA)" (Schmidt, 2008:17). In fact, al-Sistani has been attributed as saying that participation in the elections of 2005 was "more important than fasting and praying" (Ghanim, 2011: 127). Moreover, he advocated the principle of one man - one vote, and that women had should have equal votes to those of men, apparently describing the voices of the voters as being 'made of gold' (*Sawtoka min Thahab*). The Shi'a NGOs, whether belonging to the Activist or Quietist trend, were obliged to submit to his will, and inspired by his Fatwa worked actively within the Shi'a community to mobilise people to vote for the Shi'a political parties. There are four Shi'a political parties: "The Da'wa Party; ISCI; the Sadrist Trend (Office of the Martyr Sadr; Moqtada al Sadr), which is linked to Jaysh al Mahdi (including many regional splinter groups); and the Fadhila party (Fact sheet. 2008:2). In sum, the Shi'a NGOs entered the

political arena of the elections empowered by a religious order: the Fatwa of al-Sistani. In the following the role of the Shi'a NGOs in the elections is examined.

8.3 The Activist role in the elections: The case of al-Mehrab

The first and most important political role of the Shi'a NGOs was their contribution in the elections of 2005, and voting for the new constitution. To achieve this outcome the Shi'a NGOs worked hand in hand with al-Marja'iyya, the political parties, the media, mosques, and the lay Shi'a. This strategy proved to be powerful for it has delivered the Shi'a political parties victory in all elections since 2005. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 (see appendix 1) shows the results of the elections of 2005.

In this section, the role of al-Mehrab is discussed in terms of its political motivation and activities. Its involvement in the elections stems not only from theological emulation of al-Sistani, but also from its links with the Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI). al-Mehrab, as explained in chapter 3, was formed by the leader of ISCI in Iran before the war in 2002 and has been always led by the latter. It depends financially on ISCI, with its aims and functions being determined by the political leader of the party who comes from a religious- political family. Responding to both the religious order and its political ties, al-Mehrab intensively engaged in mobilising the public for the elections in 2005. This role was explained by one of the interviewees from the NGO as an important one, aimed at creating a good society by showing people what was the right choice to make.

SM M2: We introduced our vision to the people; we told them what was wrong and what was right; we showed them who was a Salih (religiously good) candidate and whose was Taleh (religiously bad), and helped them to differentiate between them. We applied an Islamic vision, and we had to show them who was compatible with Islam and who was not. We of course do not do political work. We do awareness raising work. This is a demarcating point and it is very important. The body that carries out the political work is ISCI. al-Mehrab is part of a wider network, therefore, we

inform and educate people inside and outside our organisations about the importance of the elections, and taking part in voting.

While an interviewee from ISCI, the political party, explained its relation with the NGO, i.e. how the political party and the NGO have divided the labour between themselves. He stated:

SM I1: One of the most important steps that al-Mehrab took was to educate the public on how to participate in the elections. It is true that al-Mehrab is supporting a political entity, but this support comes definitely from a real ideological issue that we share. For this reason we organised hundreds of meetings with people in order to establish a new system in this state, which the legislative authority [parliament] is part of. The political party [ISCI] is unable to do all the needed activities since there is a lot to do such as ideological and religious education. So we have taken advantage of this organisation [al-Mehrab] to spread the word of religious thought and religious tolerance, and to spread the sentiment of love amongst different sects in the society. al-Mehrab delegates its preachers to go out, urges people to adhere to their Islamic values, and gives advice on the best thing for people to do, be it on the social, religious, or political level, al-Mehrab's role is undeniable.

The organisation put all its departments into action during the election campaign. The Department of Preaching Affairs of al-Mehrab, according to al-Mehrab respondents, sent around 3,500 Mobalgheen (preachers) men and women to all cities of Iraq that are populated with the Shi'a in order to meet with the public and talk in mosques as means to mobilising people to take part in elections. They based their calls to support the Shi'a bloc on the Fatwa of al-Sistani, arguing that it was a divine order that they had to submit to, thus utilising religious discourse for political objectives. As a religious preacher, this NGO dedicates itself to showing people what is right and what is wrong, explaining to the public who acts in line with Islam: (al-Amar be al-Maroofoo wa al-Nahy an al-Munkar). This is considered a religious

responsibility of all Muslims. al-Mehrab presents itself as, firstly, an interpreter of Islam, and secondly, as an implementer of one of the most important ethos of Islam.

The Charity Department of al-Mehrab also organised meetings with women service users. In these meetings the women would sit on the floor while the speakers sat behind tables talking to them about the importance of participating in the elections. They would urge them to follow the instructions of al-Marjaia to participate in the elections, articulating that this would be seen as an expression of their support for him and his efforts to consolidate national unity, thereby eradicating sectarianism.

To mobilise service users, al-Mehrab's employees send buses to collect them and transfer them to the meeting places. Here, two factors come into play. First, most of those involved are widows who are in receipt of Kafala provision. Under this arrangement, those receiving charity support from al-Mehrab might feel obliged to do what the NGO has asked them to do, in this case, to vote as they have been advised. Second, whether from poor or the middle class backgrounds, the women are content to translate their devotion to their Imam and al-Marja' into support for the Shi'a political groups or personnel. In both cases, it would appear that the participants willingly accept their part in the clientelist relationship established by these Shi'a NGOs. However, as I did not interview any of the women concerned, it cannot be concluded categorically that none of them resented the arrangement.

The literature shows clearly how the Fatwa of al-Sistani was used by the Shi'a political groups to secure votes for the Shi'a bloc in 2005 (Ghanim, 2011). An interviewee from al-Mehrab working in Charity Department explained this as follows:

E M8: as part of our work is to gather women and mobilise them (Tahsheed) when the organisation tell us to do so. We have the widows' contact details; their telephone numbers and addresses, we contact them we tell them what

we need them for. We usually gather them in our place and we take them by buses to our events. So, when we go to a meeting, for example, if we have meetings before the elections, or a conference, we gather them and take them by buses to the place. Sometimes, we took about 18-20 buses. This is important, so we can show how many people we have. Then when we go the meetings, it is the speakers' responsibility to convince and influence women.

Despite the statement of some interviewees, like the one above regarding the widows' mobilisation for elections, others from al-Mehrab claimed that they have not been engaged in political work. Thus, whether they consider themselves as players on the political scene would appear to be contested within the organisation. The mobilisation of service users, was perceived by some of the interviewees as a given right for the organisation, since the NGO had helped them when they needed it. Regarding this stance, an interviewee from al-Mehrab explained:

SM M5: Our main aim is to help people, and we help those in need. Therefore, I reserve the right to ask for their help whenever I need it. I believe this is a legitimate request, which should not provoke any concern. Sometimes we need the help of those whom we have already helped.

Others rejected the view that there should be a relationship between social service provision and politics. One interviewee stated:

E M8: Why should widowed women be asked to vote for a specific political bloc? Are we not living in a democratic system? So why are people not free to elect whoever they want? Is this not what political freedom is all about? Each person should make up their mind. Widowed woman or poor people should not be asked to vote for this or that political bloc, for this or that candidate.

Whether this rejection was widely shared by others working for al-Mehrab is unknown. However, what is known is that al-Mehrab invites its service users to the meetings where speakers from their organisation, ISCI, or their electoral bloc speak to them on political matters. The Activist NGOs have not been the only NGOs who have mobilised people including service users, for the Quietist NGOs would appear also to have been engaged in these efforts, as is explained in the following section.

8.4 The Quietist role in the elections: the CDF and al-Thabat

In this section, two examples of Quietist NGOs provide the focus: the CDF and al-Thabat. The latter was established immediately after the war in 2003, whereas the former was inaugurated on the eve of the first national elections in 2005 prior to the writing up of the constitution. Both NGOs are emulators of al-Sistani, they are not linked to any political group, and are in favour of the perspective that the country should not be ruled by clergymen. In my interviews with al-Thabat, respondents explained to me that they would often meet with the Wakil, the agent of al-Sistani, for advice when they were faced with a critical issue. They also explained that he would inform them as to who were the preferred groups or individuals according to al-Marja'iyya. al-Thabat, would then endeavour to convey his message to their service users and their wider social network. Whether these proposed names were really preferred by al-Marja'iyya or just the favourites of the Wakil himself, is unknown. Whatever the case, al-Thabat would follow his advice, which they would see as a religious order and thus, should not be countermanded. A member of al-Thabat stated the following:

SM T1: We have to convince women to vote, because some are not happy to go to cast their votes. We tell them they have to vote for those who are good. We tell them, sweethearts, you have to vote, al-Marja'iyya told us we have to vote; so the political situation can be settled down, especially if we vote for those who are recommended by al-Marja'iyya.

While al-Mehrab mainly mobilises widows from the poor classes, al-Thabat approaches women from the middle class in addition to their service users. Consequently, although the latter organisation only supports a limited number of widows during the mourning sessions their numbers are swelled by women who are not in need of the NGO's support. In fact, many of the women attending al-Hussain mourning sessions, as explained in the last chapter, have a high level of education, with some of them being doctors and teachers. These women are told that voting for Shi'a candidates will not only please al-Marja'iyya, but also will bring political conflict to an end. al-Thabat, by talking to these women, exploits their religious feelings in relation to their devotion to the Shi'a doctrine by using this as key driver to get across their political message.

The political discourse utilised by the Shi'a NGOs, whether they were linked to al-Marja'iyya or to the political parties, revolved around the notion that if people voted for their Shi'a political parties and won the elections, this would guarantee that the old regime would not be revived again and hence, there would be political stability with the Shi'a in charge.

The CDF also took an active role in the elections despite the sectarian violence and an interviewee from the organisation explained their engagement as follows:

SM C1: Our organisations' members endured threats and dangerous situations. There was terror, explosions, but our organisation activists did not stop going to dangerous areas to inspire and encourage men and women to participate in the elections. For example, 70 or 80 percent of our organisations, such as al-Bayan, al-Thabat, ahali al-Madina and others focused on the elections.

The CDF umbrella, which consisted of 26 Shi'a NGOs, was not linked to any Shi'a political party. However, their members were active, organising many meetings with their community members in the suburbs, mosques and in the Hussainaia as well as talking on the TV satellite channels. The CDF, however, did not see their role

as only influencing the voter's choice, but also organising people's participation, by for example, checking the names of the voters against their lists in the ration distribution shops, where the ration card was used as the basis for forming the electoral roll. They also organised transportation and sent about 5,000 people to the voting centres to supervise the elections. All the supervisors, according the CDF interviewees, worked on a voluntary basis seeing it as a religious duty that needed no financial return.

The CDF also nominated people for membership of parliament. Interviewees from the members of the organisation described their role as "manufacturing statesmen and stateswomen" by putting forward nominees for the elections. They prepared their preferred candidates by providing education and training so that they would be able to occupy places in the state and non-state organisations effectively. An interviewee from the CDF explained their process behind nominating men and women as governmental officials as follows:

SM C2: We act like a football coach; unless we go to the cities' leagues and find who the potential good footballers are, where else can we find players for our national team? We have to find men and women who we can train, teach, and send to be state decision makers. We train people in line with our religious thoughts. If we have well equipped Muslims they will shape the state's policies according to Islam on a grassroots level. In this sense, we do not need to establish an Islamic state top down as it happened in Iran. If the candidates are already representative of Islam they will reflect their vision in the state's daily work. Thus we do not need to establish an Islamic state. We will have an Islamic state de-facto.

The CDF, having their own social and religious network of independent individuals who emulate al-Sistani, concerns itself with finding lay Shi'a to run for public office, because they are not in favour of clergymen occupying official positions and they are not linked to any political party. However, they promote only those considered religious enough in their devotion to Islam for government posts. Thus, the CDF can

be seen as playing the role of the middleman that transfers the advice and guidance from al-Marja'iyya to the state and society.

Light can be shed on the role of the Shi'a NGOs during the elections and after by considering the electoral campaigns run by the two camps: the Activists and the Quietists. That is, the following analysis of their campaigns provides understanding of the ensuing the sectarian conflict that has been shaping the social and political features of Iraqi society, reaching its peak with the insurrection by Islamic Sunni Militias that started in June 2014.

8.5 The Shi'a NGOs electoral campaign discourse for political mobilisation

The Shi'a NGOs launched widespread electoral campaigns, which were heavily imbued with a religious discourse, despite the fact that the election commission issued a ban on any use of religious symbols in the elections. An interviewee from of al-Thabat, stated:

SM T2: We organised lectures on elections, we talked about the importance of the vote... and how this vote should not go wasted. If there is an organisation that people trust, they will listen to it, and they will go for elections. Our Hussainaia became a site to galvanise people for the elections. We told people to go and vote. They listened to us because the organisation is reliable...our place became a place for mobilisation '*Tahsheed*'.

The utilisation of Hussainaia and mosques as religious places for political purposes is not new, for they have often been used as places for political mobilisation by both Shi'a and Sunni Muslim organisations for a long time (Hoffman, 2014; Jabar, 2011). The elections campaign's discourse reminded the Shi'a voters of their history, struggle and tragedies. Moreover, participation in the election was purported to grant a "victory to the religion of God, his messenger, and his progeny" (Ghanim, 2011: 127). Hence, voting for the Shi'a bloc in the elections was "explicitly equated

with the sacred act of promoting Islam” (Ghanim, 2011: 127). My interview with a representative of the ahali al-Madina Assembly, a member of the CDF in al-Sadr city, revealed some of their key work.

SM AM1: We encouraged people to vote. We played a role between our Marja’iyya and our people. Our work was to maintain the relationship with the people. People started to know us and we began to encourage them to participate in the elections. We were working with our social bases and we carried out the biggest task to educate the public. We attended many training courses on the election process and the observation of the elections.

During the Shi’a NGOs’ campaign, special attention was paid to women’s votes, “going so far as to tell women that they were religiously obligated to vote, even if their husbands had forbidden them to do so” (Nasr, 2006: 136). The image of Zainab was extensively utilised to encourage women to vote, with flyers being circulated in the Shiite cities claiming that “women who go forth to the polling centres on elections day are like Zainab, who went forth to the field of battle at Karbala” (al-Rahim, 2005).

The other data, drawn from speeches made by imams in mosques during Friday prayers in the mainly Shi’a southern cities of Iraq and broadcast on TV satellite channels, show that the electoral campaigns encouraged people to vote for the future state of the Shi’a. They were constantly reminded of the consequences if they did not and were urged that this was a religious duty, an examination from God, to separate who was faithful to ahl-al-Bayt (the Family of Mohammad) from those who were not. Moreover, the elections’ religious - political discourse warned the Shi’a that if they did not participate and vote for the Shi’a candidates, they would “end up in hell” (Ghanim, 2011: 127). Even the Imams of mosques warned the Shi’a of the outcome if they lost in the elections, claiming that the opponents of the Shi’a were just around the corner and would deprive them of being able to exercise their rights and ban them from practising their rituals, such as holding

mourning sessions and visiting the Shrines of the Imams. As has been explained previously, these are two of the most significant Shi'a rituals. Given that the Shi'a had already had a taste of freedom from 2003-2005, they were threatened that they would definitely lose this if they lost the elections. They were continuously reminded that if you do not vote, Saddam will come back in a different guise. Finally, the discourse warned the Shi'a that worse than Saddam, a Sunni Islamist tyranny of an al-Qaida type, bent upon destroying them, as they considered them infidels, would take power if they did not vote (Murphy, 2004).

The Shi'a TV channel satellites frequently highlighted the atrocities of Saddam Hussein's regime by continuously reading poems and showing horrific images of his deeds. Karbala TV⁵¹ channel, for example, repeatedly broadcast the following poem with music and documentary images of mass graves, and the Iraqi army torture of Iraqi people during the 1991 uprising⁵²:

If I do not vote
 I will be forbidden from visiting Hussain (the second Imam Shrine)
 If I do not vote
 The mourning will be banned (sessions)
 If I do not vote
 The 'comrades' will come back (the Ba'th party members)
 If I do not vote
 There will be no pans to cook food for Hussain ⁵³
 What is wrong with you Iraqi People?
 Your wounds are still unrecovered
 And they are still hurt ever day

51 The channel belongs to the holy Shrine in Karbala. It is funded by the Shi'a Waqf and aims to introduce Shi'a religious discourse to the public, being inspired by al-Sistani. [Online] Available from: on <http://www.karbala-tv.net/about.php>. [Accessed 23 Aug2013].

⁵² This discourse was recorded and distributed on youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvMZYHO_xH8

⁵³ Shi'a ritual practised in Muharram, which includes cooking food and distributing it to the poor and neighbours for the sake of the Imam. This ritual is understood to bring Thawab and Ajr for the provider.

We will go
We will vote
We are ready to die on the ballot box
So the Ba'th party will not come back again.

The Shi'a NGOs engagement was part of a comprehensive electoral campaign, which was not only aimed at getting out the vote for the Shi'a political bloc in the elections, but also helped ensure that they were eligible to vote as well as providing transport for those living in remote areas. In addition, they took part in supervising the elections in order to making sure they were conducted smoothly. These NGOs also had a role in mobilising people to vote for the first constitution in October 2005, the importance of which is explained in the following section.

8.6 Voting for the new constitution

The constitution committee was elected following the first elections to the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) in January 2005, which took on the responsibility of writing a constitution before general parliamentary elections. The Shi'a NGOs studied in this chapter had different inputs to this, for while al-Mehrab is linked to a political party it had no need to be involved and simply promoted its acceptance by the masses. As the Quietists have no links to a party, they were not represented on the committee in charge of drawing up the constitution. This led to these Shi'a NGOs coming together in Baghdad in July 2005 to propose a number of articles that they wanted to be included in it. This was explained in my interviews with the CDF members, who stated that although they had no experience in this field, they made their points and submitted their proposals to the committee in charge. The committee was dominated by Shi'a as the Sunni had boycotted the first elections. The most significant point of the constitution was the affirmation of the role of Islam and the July conference led to the announcement the formation of CDF as a new umbrella organisation. In the following, I shed the light on the Quietist NGOs involvement in writing the constitution by explaining their role at this conference.

The Quietist Shi'a NGOs' First National Conference

The Shi'a NGOs gathered in Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq, on the 29th and 30th of July 2005. The conference was held under the motto of 'The constitution is a responsibility and fate', and was broadcast live over two days on the Iraqia TV satellite channel⁵⁴. It was attended, according to an interviewee from the al-Thabat organisation, by a number of political groups even though the participating NGOs themselves were not affiliated to political parties. An interviewee from the CDF explained:

SM T2: the conference was attended by a number of persons from different political parties, across different affiliations, such as Hussain al-Shahrastani, the minister of oil, Jalal al-din al-Saghir, a leading member of the SCIRI, and Khuthair al-Khuzai from the al-Da'wa party, who became the deputy to the Iraqi president as well as others who became ministers.

The conference, according to an interviewee from the CDF, was also attended by participants who were loyal to al-Sistani. At least 60 percent were his emulators (*Moqaldin*) and these people had to follow his instruction as an integral part of Taqlid tradition. A number of issues were debated of which the most important ones were: the role of religion in relation to the state; the role of women in the new state and the acknowledgment of the Shi'a rituals in the constitution. Also, the issue of the state's responsibility for providing welfare, and what was the basic unit entitled to state provision - the individual or the family - were discussed. The majority of the attendees favoured considering the family over individuals as the unit entitled to such provision. An interviewee from the CDF talked about the debates as follows:

SM C2: All the NGOs were busy with the constitution. If we succeeded in writing a constitution written by Iraqi hands and with an Iraqi spirit, we would make the achievement of the century. Because the constitution is the guarantor to ours' and the next generation, it was a response to al-

⁵⁴ The government TV satellite channel.

Marja'yyia's voice. We proposed a number of motions, such as: there will be no law that contradicts Islamic Shari'a. Our constitution is our Quran and the constitution is superior over any law in the state, such as the Personal Status Code⁵⁵. We wanted an official recognition of Hussain rituals. Even for human rights, Islam calls for human's rights, but from which prospective? We know that democracy does not always fit with Islam 100 percent. However, we insisted on the adoption of democratic values that did not violate Islamic principles.

A number of workshops were organised at the two day conference, with each having about 30 to 50 participants, both men and women and there was, in particular, intense debate about the previous law of family affairs, which was considered as secular and pro-women. Despite the debate about the role of Islam, especially in relation to women and family affairs, the conference succeeded in reaching a unified vision about what they wanted in the constitution. As the one of the CDF interviewed explained, they subsequently forwarded their proposals to the Constitutional Committee, several of which became articles in the final draft of the constitution.

The conference was not only inspired by al-Sistani's political vision, but was also partially funded by him as well as by the constitutional committee, which had already been formed by the Shi'a political parties following the first elections of January 2005. The CDF helped the Shi'a Quietist NGOs to advocate al-Sistani's views in politics, in particular regarding the elections, the writing of the constitution and, most importantly, to institutionalise their links with his office through his *Wakil*. In the words of an interviewee for the CDF, the link with al-Sistani had provided them with considerable weight in the eyes of the Shi'a political parties. Thus, given the

⁵⁵ The Personal Status Code was issued in 1959, a year after the revolution of 1958; it "introduced a wide range of progressive regulations. Among these were strict conditions for marriage to a second wife, the stipulation of 18 years as the normal minimum age for marriage, prohibition of forced marriage, and the right of women to make a request to the court for divorce." (Fischer-Tahir, 2010: 1382).

CDF's close ties with al-Sistani's very popular Quietist trend, the former was conferred high status whilst pursuing their goal of state building.

The experience of the Shi'a NGOs shows clearly that writing the constitution in line with Islam was taken seriously as it was generally agreed that there needed to be a consensus on of the role of Islam in the state. This eventually manifested itself in three ways: firstly, in a number of articles that stated its role explicitly; confirming that "Islam is the official religion of Iraq and it is a fundamental source of legislation" (Ghai and Cottrel, NY:6); secondly, articles that limited other provisions if they contradict Islam, stating that there will be no law that contradicts the rule of Islam (Article 2 (1) affirms that "no law may be enacted that violates the established rulings of Islam" (Hamoudi, 2011:1282), and thirdly, the institutionalisation of a new authority pertaining to Islamic Jurisprudence to ensure the application of Islam, that is, the formation of the Federal Supreme Court. The latter was to be made up of "a number of judges, experts in Islamic jurisprudence, and law experts" (PILPG Report: 30). The constitution was put to a nationwide referendum on October 15, 2005, and was approved by the majority of those who voted: 78.6% in favour and 21.4% against.

In addition to their role of mobilising people to vote for the constitution in the referendum, the Shi'a NGOs exercised their political power in other ways. The CDF, for example, took on the task not only of proposing nominees for the elections and advising people to choose the best candidates, but also engaged in raising awareness campaigns to educate the Shi'a citizens in how to behave politically. This is explained in the following section.

8.7 The Shi'a NGOs' role in building citizens who respect the state

The interviewees from the CDF explained to me that they were not only engaged in influencing the citizens during the election times, but they also focused on educating them about the ways in which they could express themselves politically. The CDF, as an umbrella organisation of NGOs, has used its members' social

networks, membership lists, as well as their service users as an audience to deliver their message. Since the CDF has a membership of 12⁵⁶ Shi'a NGOs in at least 6 cities in Iraq its influence is widespread. al-Thabat, for example, has often provided an audience for the CDF to listen to their views. Its interviewees told me that they have good relations with the CDF and if the latter want to talk to the community about specific issues, they send buses to al-Hussainaia where al-Thabat is based to collect women and then transfer them to the meeting place.

This arrangement resonates with that used by al-Mehrab's charity department, whereby it mobilises its service users for the sake of the political party or ISCI. However, the CDF does not usually provide social services or Kafala and does not organise mourning sessions, but al-Thabat provides it with a social base that they can rely on to mobilise during the elections time or, as has been seen when voting for the constitution. Thus, both the CDF and al-Thabat can be perceived of as engaging in a clientelistic relationship with those involved with their organisations.

The CDF representatives asserted that they would talk about democracy, the right of expression and utilising the elections as a way to choose those who would best represent the values of Islam and to punish those who misused the voters trust by not voting for them again. These awareness raising activities of the CDF were intended to create a new relationship between the citizen and the state. In this regard, a member of the CDF explained their intention as follows:

SM C1: Our work is to create a generation that understands that if they want to punish the government, they should do that through ballot boxes not through joining demonstrations or swearing at the government or saying bad things against the state on Facebook. We want to create a generation that knows what to do in a democratic state and knows how to interact with the government.

⁵⁶ When I had my interview with the CDF in October 2011 they stated that their number when they established their organisation was 26. In my interview with them in 2013, they stated the number was now 12.

However, it advised against the employment of other mechanisms that are common in democratic systems, such as demonstrations or using social media networks, as a means of legitimate political expression. That is, the different kinds of political expression common in the West, away from elections, have been perceived by the CDF as inappropriate. The elections themselves did not provide the Shi'a with a lot of choice since their vote was already determined by al-Marja'iyya, who claimed to speak on their behalf. Consequently, the CDF performed the role of defender and protector of the state at the expense of failing to protect citizens' rights. Instead of carrying out advocacy work to support citizens, it has endeavoured to convey the message of having to give up the rights that the new democratic system could supposedly afford them and narrowing their input down to just voting in the elections. As such, the CDF has been shaping citizens' political behaviour and right of expression for the sake of state and hence, it has become its representative working to ensure that the public conforms to its vision. In sum, the motivation of CDF NGOs is to promote the state's power such that they have become pro-state NGOs.

Given that the CDF is linked to no political party, unlike al-Mehrab, it seems that their work with citizens is geared towards empowering the new state. It, however, has not only been occupied with raising awareness of the Shi'a citizens in order to create a new kind of relation between them and the state, for it has also focused on building the capacity of the state, as the next section explains.

8.8 The NGOs as a fifth authority or as a state's twin

The CDF's desire is that the new state considers the NGOs as a fifth authority that enjoys a significant position alongside its four others: legislative, executive, judicial, and media. To reach this stage, it has been lobbying the state to allow this sector to become involved in the drawing up of laws, surveillance of government performance as well as raising awareness amongst statesmen and stateswomen about the importance of their partnering with the sector. The purpose of the

partnership, from the CDF's point of view, is to help build the state's capacity to run its affairs and to enable it to implement its programmes. To this end, the CDF has been offering to train state departments about a variety of issues, such as how to fight corruption, how to use their financial resources effectively, drawing attention to the importance of education and the necessity of changing the curriculum to fit with the new post war era. The CDF interviewees reported that they have organised workshops, run training courses, sent professional NGO activists to advise the government institutions, shadowed decision making committees, attended parliament and been invited to government meetings. Moreover, they have hosted meetings and conferences for statesmen and stateswomen, such as members of parliament, ministers as well as the media, university lecturers, clergymen, and NGOs activists, to talk about variety of issues related to the state and society.

Given that the Activist NGOs have had direct access to the state institutions through their political parties, the CDF's hope is that through the aforementioned form of partnership, or twinning as they call it, this will compensate them for not having political parties or clergymen in the state apparatus. Through the partnership, it aims to transfer the vision of al-Marja'iyya to the state decision makers. This was expressed by the CDF interviewees, claiming that their link to al-Sistani is known to the statesmen and stateswomen and that this is significant as it provides the organisation with credibility and political weight. Thus, acknowledgment by the state of the partnering role would provide the Quietists with a competitive mechanism to shape the political future of the state and society driven from the outside. The persistence of the CDF to partner or twin with the state brings to mind the experience of Bonyads in Iran (Saeidi, 2004; Messkoub, 2006), which were tasked with integrating religion into the state by creating parallel organisations to it. Bonyads were formed top down by the supreme leader of Iran, al-Khomeini, and the leadership of these NGOs was held by clergymen with huge financial resources and significant independence from state control. The CDF represents a different type of NGO working in an Islamic context that similar to the Bonyads also aims to act as facilitator for al-Marja'iyya's views being represented at the state level. The interviewees from the CDF gave some examples where they had brought to a

number of ministries' attention cases of corruption in their institution or had offered free training for statesmen and stateswomen, in particular, in their project to develop a mechanism of partnership between the Iraqi parliament, civil society, and state institutions.

Following this discussion about the CDF as Quietist NGOs supporting the state beyond the elections, partnership with the state, and informing citizens political behaviour, now, I turn to al-Mehrab's efforts to support the state, not only at the present time, but also in the future through building a new generation.

8.9 The Shi'a NGOs strategic planning in protecting the future of the Shi'a-led State

The intention to utilise education to influence the new generation ideologically and politically is not new in Iraq. In 1973, for instance, Saddam Hussein declared that the central task of national education was to defy the country's traditional enemies and to teach children a hatred of imperialism (Bengio, 1993: 127). Before 2003, therefore, the most important task of education was to "raise sentiments of *wataniyya*" (patriotic sentiment) (ibid: 91). The previous regime adopted different strategies to achieve its aim, such as mobilising children in organisations that had military features. Pupils between the ages of 15 and 20 were trained in their schools to enhance their fighting character and "begin to implant the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of the homeland" (Al-Khaizaran 2007: 329). The ideologisation and political influencing of children through education is therefore not unknown in Iraq, as education according to Murray "is never neutral, it is intrinsically ideological and political" (Murray, 2008: 39). al-Mehrab, as one of the largest education providers within the Shi'a community, seems to have adopted a similar strategy following the collapse of the Ba'ath Party in 2003. This was explained in these statements made by the interviewees from the organisation:

SM M10: Education of young people is always an important issue. Do you remember how Saddam Hussein's regime focused on youth? Do you

remember when he said; 'win the youth today, you will secure the future'. The youth are very important and unless we teach them in their primary stages it will be difficult to win them over later on.

al-Mehrab's intention to utilise its education provision was explained by another respondent in this way:

SM M7: If we build our children's personalities in 5 to 8 years, we will have a new generation who will run the future state. This is our strategic plan. Our tactical actions are to run some projects for children since, as you can see, our parliament is not concerned with children's issues. We consider education for children as a basic foundation which we have to rely on to build the future society. We want to build the personality of the Muslim and enable him to shoulder his responsibility towards his God, himself, his family, his society, and his nation.

In a meeting held in Najaf city organised by al-Mehrab⁵⁷, one of the speakers explained the importance of education of children by stating the following:

"The country [Iraq] is passing through a critical stage; we deal, more than any other group, with students from nurseries to universities so to bring people back to the righteous Islamic path. We have to take care of our children. If Iraq is to become a true Islamic state in twenty years and be able to face various cultural assaults, we have to start with the education of children.

al-Mehrab has a number of educational projects, such as Madares Imam Ali, the summer courses, Quranic classes, and also their linked NGOs that focus only on

⁵⁷ The meeting took place in Najaf city, in March 2013, and was held in one of the halls of the Women and Children's Department of al-Mehrab. It was attended by at least two members of parliament, a representative of the city council, a representative of at least one of the Marja'iyya, the teachers union, the health authority and the education authority of the city. The meeting was broadcast on the ISCI TV channel (Al-Furat).

youth. In my interviews with a representative of a secular political party commented on the Islamic schools run by Shi'a NGOs:

R PP: Those graduated from these Madares form a new generation of religious politicians who will lead the state. It provides a new generation of preachers, army leaders, media professionals, educators, who are already taught the Shi'a doctrine.

In general, the utilisation of education is one of the important areas of Islamic NGOs since their modern emergence with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, aimed at manufacturing the future men and women in accordance with Islamic values. The Sunni Islamic NGOs linked to oppositional social movements in the Middle East have used education as a tool to Islamise society and in turn the state, bottom up. By contrast, because the Shi'a are in power, these NGOs have been concerned with maintaining the status quo. Thus the Shi'a NGOs, as the case of al-Mehrab shows, aim to build the new generation to rule the state and guide society in line with Islam. This intention can be understood as a key principle for a number of reasons: first, these NGOs are already linked to political parties or the religious establishment, who are both keen to protect and maintain the status quo. Thus, the use of education is an important and vital source for preparing a pool of human resources for the future state.

Second, given the sectarian violent context in which the Shi'a NGOs operate, there would be no guarantees for this type of NGO to move freely and publicly, if they were ruled by a non-Shi'a state. It is possible that the very existence of the Shi'a NGOs would come under question amid the sectarian conflict that is currently sweeping the country. Hence, the best defence for the Shi'a NGOs is to protect the existence of the state at the present time and in the future, for this in turn, will ensure their survival. al-Mehrab's aim is to build an Islamic state through the Activist approach that calls for a powerful intervention of the religious leaders. This is promoted in the Madares, by organising outdoor activities, such as celebrating religious events at the national level, teaching children the Quran, Fiqh, or the

history of Shi'a as well as claiming their right to rule the Ummah. In sum, the Shi'a NGOs, whether they are linked to the Activists or the Quietists, are keen on supporting the state, each in their own way.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the research question relating to understanding the political aspect of the Shi'a NGO activities. It has endeavoured to understand the motivations that underpin their activities, looked at the ways in which they have been striving to consolidate the role of the new reformed Shi'a led state by contributing to the reshaping of the state-society relations in line with their associated Shi'a political groups or the religious establishment. These issues have been covered by drawing on the experience of Shi'a NGOs, both of an Activist and Quietist nature.

It has become clear from the above discussion that the Shi'a NGOs, like other Islamic NGOs, have worked to mobilise their service users and the wider public to vote in elections. Thus, at first glance, they appear not to differ from Islamic Sunni NGOs that consider voting, which is a political action, to be a religious duty as discussed in chapter 2 (Tugal, 2009). Given the higher religious establishment or al-Marja'iyya was heavily engaged in the election process in 2005, the Shi'a NGOs worked hard to make this event a success for the Shi'a political parties. However, some were not only driven by the Fatwa or religious order, for those such as al-Mehrab were linked to political parties and hence, had a direct interest in contesting in the elections.

Given that the Quietist NGOs have no link to political parties nor do they accept that clergymen should occupy state office, the empirical work has shown that the CDF has the will to achieve a new form of political involvement as a formal partner to the state. To this end, it has not only gained access to the state institutions, but has also acted as a bridge between the Marja'iyya and the state. The conclusion has also been reached that the Shi'a NGOs are not lobbying the state to respond to their community's needs, as the literature on NGOs has stated is their role (Hulme

and Edwards, 1997), but rather, they have been lobbying the citizens instead. In so doing, in particular as the case of the CDF shows, their aim is to limit their constituency of political choice, by narrowing it down to be used in elections and counselling against other forms of political expression. Moreover, since the vote itself has been informed by the tradition of Taqlid or emulation then any real political choice would appear to have already been compromised, as opposed to promoted, by the Shi'a NGOs. Further, while al-Mehrab supports the Shi'a state, it has been understandably supporting and empowering its own political party through promoting its candidates in the elections. In sum, the political efforts of the Shi'a NGOs, whether they are linked to the Activist trend or the Quietist Marja'iyya reveal that they have been acting as pro-state NGOs. However, the Activists have been doing so quite up front, whereas the Quietist CDF has been working more behind the scenes, by becoming an advisor to the state, thereby indirectly promoting the beliefs of al-Marja'iyya.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises the main findings of this research and relates them back to literature concerned with NGOs. It explains the ways that NGOs are perceived in Western countries differ to those of Islamic ones, and hence, the literature pertaining to the former cannot much shed light on the experience of these organisations. Consequently, given the common feature of Islam in Shi'a and Sunni NGOs they would appear to be the closest in terms of their provision. That is, the multifaceted roles carried out by the Sunni Islamic NGOs in social services and their theological input, both contribute to achieving political aims, which is also the case for Shi'a NGOs, inside and outside Iraq, although as has been elicited in this work, for different aims and objectives. Thus, despite the fact that this is not a comparative case study between these two types of NGOs, the experience of Sunni Islamic NGOs is deemed a good starting point for providing understanding of the particularities of the activities and motivations of their Shi'a counterparts in Iraq. Moreover, this chapter considers the internal division between the two trends of the Islamic Shi'a NGOs within that country, namely Activists and Quietists by considering the differences and similarities in the provision and their overall mission. In so doing, the three research questions posed for guiding the analysis of this thesis are addressed.

The chapter is organised as follows: section 9.2 provides a brief overview of the differences between NGOs as defined in the Western literature and Shi'a NGOs, whereas 9.3 examines the similarities and differences between Islamic Sunni NGOs and Shi'a ones, as has appeared in extant work and in the research findings. Section 9.4 considers the activities and mission of the two trends of Islamic Shi'a NGOs, Activists and Quietists, in relation to how these have impacted on the state and society at large. Section 9.5 puts forward a novel conceptualisation of the process that these NGOs have been participating in, namely Shi'aisation. Section 9.6

discusses the research limitations and section 9.7 proposes avenues for further research.

9.2 Shi'a NGOs in Iraq compared to NGOs in the Western context

The flourishing of the Islamic Shi'a NGO phenomenon in Iraq did not happen spontaneously, or in the words of Hulme and Edwards was not an 'accident' (1997:5). The establishment of these NGOs was first of all made possible by the new political changes in this country. These Shi'a NGOs, unlike those in the Western context, did not mushroom as a result of the adoption of neoliberal policies nor as a result of the aim to reduce the role of the state in social welfare provision. Instead, they tasked themselves with the mission to contribute in the reforming of the state and society in line with either of the two trends that dominate the Shi'a doctrine.

The literature relating to NGOs holds that they are independent from the state, but the experience of Shi'a NGOs refutes this notion. The Islamic Shi'a NGOs in Iraq were initially established by political parties or the religious establishment to ensure that the state was ruled by a constitution based on Islam, and once the Shi'a came to power some, such as the CDF, had a direct input into the running of the state. Moreover, the Islamic NGO interest in the politics of the state has led them to focus on mobilising their followers for elections, which they justified as part of their efforts to raise societal awareness to create a good society that follows the rules of Islam.

The empirical evidence from the Shi'a NGOs work during the elections of 2005 and the subsequent passing of the constitution have demonstrated the extent of the interest of Islamic Shi'a NGOs in the politics of the state. The CDF has up to this day provided training for members of parliament and other state officials on matters such as anti-corruption, effective budgeting and state building. Although al-Thabat is independent from the state, it uses its influence amongst its followers to encourage their supporting its reinforcement through the exercising of the Islamic constitution

Further assertions of the NGO literature in the Western context are that the NGOs are formed based on voluntary initiatives by citizens, they are self governed and they enjoy autonomous status. Clearly, the Islamic Shi'a NGO al-Mehrab having been established by a political leader, the head of the SCIRI, does not fit any of these categories. Similarly, the CDF was established by a representative of al-Marja'iyya and as reported by interviewees from the organisation, they often seek guidance from him on religious and political matters. The grassroots NGO of those investigated for this thesis, which could be classed being a voluntary initiative, is the case of al-Thabat, for it was established by a group of pious women wishing to conduct Shi'a rituals, who later on, were advised to turn their group into an NGO. However, its members did report that it worked in line with the instruction of al-Sistani in fostering the development of good Muslim women and families, thus bringing into question the level of its autonomy.

To summarise, the fundamental differences between the definitions and characterisation of the NGOs in the Western context and Shi'a ones in Iraq, means that they have taken on a completely different form to how they were originally perceived as functioning. Hence, to understand the nature of Shi'a NGOs it is more appropriate to examine them with their counterpart Islamic Sunni NGOs in relation to their motivations and operations, as covered next

9.3 Islamic Shi'a NGOs in Iraq and Sunni NGOs

The Islamic NGOs from the Sunni and Shi'a sects share some objectives such as providing for the poor, which is a religious duty underpinned by the notion that Muslims are responsible for supporting those in need: it is one of the pillars of Islam and it is rewarded. Two of the Shi'a NGOs of the current research are engaged in social service provision, that is, al-Mehrab and al-Thabat. Each of these NGOs became involved in particular to provide for widows and orphan owing to the consequences of the post war era, occupation and internal conflict. The key objective of the social welfare of these two NGOs was to protect widowed families who had lost their male breadwinner, since this group was considered as vulnerable

to economic and social challenges. The loss of the male breadwinner was seen as important not only for economic reasons, but also because if it was not addressed could destroy families and hence threaten the fabric of society.

The motivation for Islamic donors towards such provision is that those who contribute are considered to be serving a religious duty, which will meet with God's satisfaction. That is, such actions will bring 'Ajr' and Thawab' which convey the idea that God will witness their work and will bless them with better fortune in the present life as well as in the afterlife. In addition, she/he will be also blessed by Imams who will stand beside her/him in troubled times and will respond to their needs if the latter asks for their Shafa'ah or intercession. The fieldwork shows that the concept of Shafa'ah, and Ajr and Thawab are significant for the Shi'a NGOs, as well as their donors and recipients. In other words, seeking God and the Imams' satisfaction is expressed through making religious donations to these NGOs. In sum, the key motivations for the social service provision by al-Mehrab and al-Thabat is to perform a religious duty and to protect the wider society from harm that can be caused through poverty. Regarding which, it should be noted that representatives from both organisations believed that the state was ultimately responsible for such provision and that they would reduce their involvement once it was in a financial position to meet its obligations.

The Islamic NGOs objective influencing the moral and ethics of the society in a way that sacralises their community is common across the Middle East. al-Mehrab in Iraq has set up Madares and summer schools to teach young people the appropriate ways to behave in their quest to manufacture good Muslims and as such, has been working bottom up to ensure the Islamisation of society as whole. This project is also being pursued top down by their linked political party in parliament, which they work to keep in power by urging their constituency to do so. This they achieve not only through schools, but also through their Hijab ceremonies and by helping to pay for wedding ceremonies. Al-Thabat uses mourning rituals to introduce role models like Fatima to inform women about their moral duty to help spread Islamic values amongst their families, which all of the focal NGOs for this

research considered to be the building blocks of society. In sum, human building in terms of Islamising the way that Muslims think and act is an important objective shared by Islamic Shi'a and Sunni NGOs.

In relation to the political involvement of NGOs, the political activities of Islamic NGOs in Iraq have been similar in that they have been geared towards state building. That is, quite soon after the formation of al-Mehrab and the CDF, Islamic parties were elected to government with the help of these organisations in addition to many other supporters and since then they have tasked themselves with ensuring that an Islamic state is put in place. However, unlike the Bonyads they have not set up large companies that act economically as parallel to state institutions. al-Thabat has only been involved in state building activities in an indirect and minor way through shaping the moral behaviour of widows. The empirical work has shown that the Shi'a NGOs have taken advantage of their social services by mobilising their service users to help fulfil their political agenda through a culture of clientelism.

9.4 Shi'a NGOs in Iraq: Activism and Quietism

Before focussing on the key findings regarding the three Shi'a NGOs investigated for this research, it is worth providing a brief recap of their operational status as elicited from the interviews. They are formal organisations that have a required organisational structure, which permits them to carry out their programmes, as stated in the general definition of such organisations (Martens, 2002: 282). They are registered with the directorate of the NGOs; work under Iraqi NGO law; are obliged to submit their annual financial and activities reports to the directorate and are required to maintain a formal organisational structure in order to be able to run their affairs legally. They have their own offices, sometimes based in religious places, such as Hussainaia. They employ volunteers or paid workers, although the salaries of the employees are often well below those they could earn in other sectors. Their sources of funding vary, with al-Mehrab, being financed by political parties, whilst the CDF is resourced by al-Marja'iyya and external donors. That is,

these large NGOs have access to state and international funding as well as pious Shi'a through Khums (religious tax). By contrast, small grassroots NGOs, like al-Thabat, do not qualify for political funding and/or are not willing to accept international tied support that would compromise their mission, thus relying mostly on their own community's resources.

In general, the in depth investigation into the Shi'a NGOs has revealed that they function in accordance with the thesis analytical framework taken from Davis and Robinson (2012). That is, each use their social services to provide for the poor, engage in religious teaching and to a greater or lesser extent involve themselves in politics in an interconnected manner. Although the CDF does not directly contribute to provision for the poor, the fact that it is an umbrella organisation to which al-Thabat is affiliated, means that it has a close connection with this form of programme delivery. Their overall mission is the sacralising of society and their key differences lie in the manner and extent to which they engage in the politics of the state. Whether linked to an Activist political party or the Quietist Marja'iyya, they have been state building as part of the Shi's revival in order to enhance the position of that sect in the post war settlement. This is clearly apparent in the motives for their welfare provision, their education programmes and performance of their rituals. In the following subsections, the operations and motivations behind these are summarised for each of the focal organisations in order to address the three main research questions, which are:

1. Why have Shi'a NGOs risen to prominence in social and political life in Iraq after the regime change in 2003?
2. What are the main social services, religious, or political activities that they are engaged in?
3. What is the significance of these services and activities for the state and society in Iraq?

9.4.1 The Activist trend: al-Mehrab

As pointed out above, al-Mehrab is linked to a political party, ISCI. This party, after the war, departed from its pre-war slogan to launch a revolution and establish an Islamic state in Iraq in the manner undertaken by Iran. Instead, the party established by the Activist religious Marja'iyya, was tasked with using its considerable power to intervene in politics of the state. al-Mehrab is also led by the leader of political group that this party belongs to and the boundaries between them are blurred. In fact, this political grouping acceded to government in 2005 and has held power ever since. Hence, the NGO see its role as helping to strengthen the state and maintaining its associated party in power. Moreover, it does not perceive itself as simply dealing with the problems faced in current society, for it structures its operations with the ultimate strategic goal of creating an Islamic state and society. This is witnessed in their programmes, in particular, those carried through their Madares al-Imam Ali, which are focused on manufacturing a new generation of Shi'a Muslims to lead the state and society. Their choice of programmes, such as Sin-al-Takleef al-Sha'rie, whereby girls are considered to be women at the age of nine and hence, should wear Hijab, is not accidental. For, the ceremonies of Hijab are addressed by the leader of al-Mehrab, and dignitaries, local government officials, as well as the families of the girls who are invited to these events. In other words, this activity for school girls is part of a wider strategy to Islamize society through the work of the NGO. In this type of activity the political group and the NGO work together, driven by their aim to influence the community choice and make it more religious; more Islamic.

Their provision for widowed families is explained, above anything else, as being for protecting the family, which is the basic cell of society and hence, maintaining cohesion in the latter. In general, the work of al-Mehrab is to help its associated political party maintain power, by helping those in need, influencing their way of thinking, and mobilising their votes. This type of grassroots social service provision is similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood or Hezbollah, in terms of politicisation of their social welfare through establishing a clientelistic culture. On the other

hand, the work of al-Mehrab aimed at integrating the religion into the state, which has manifested itself in the mobilisation of people to vote for the Shi'a candidates and the new Islamic constitution. Which means that they not only influence the politics of society bottom up by mobilising support for ISCI through their programmes, but have also exerted their influence top down by having directly been involved in the passing of Islamic law and ensuring that there is an Islamic government. Thus, it can be concluded that al-Mehrab's positioning is somewhere in between being of the state and being separate from it, More specifically, despite the reality that it is working to support the state, it is not as privileged as the Bonyads who are exempt from the government surveillance that is carried by the directorate of the NGOs. In fact, it has to compete with others, including other Shi'a, for access to state public funding, because there are sectarian divisions within the Shi'a sect too.

9.4.2 The Quietist trend: the CDF

As has been pointed out previously, the CDF is not only an NGO, but is also an alliance of different Shi'a NGOs that are supporters of al-Sistani's vision that the Ummah should lead itself. This is in contrast to the view of the higher authority in Iran, whereby the clergymen are considered to have a leading role in the state and hence, there is Welayat al-Faqih (Guardian of Jurists). Thus, this NGO, as a Quietist organisation rejects clergymen taking up state posts, but it does accept that they should have an advisory role. For this reason, it is not linked to any political party, but instead emulates al-Sistani and its link to the latter's office is through his Wakil (representative or agent) who supervises their NGO work.

The CDF's influence on the state and society can be described as horizontal with two modes of operation, whereby it works with the state and with its own organisational members, one of which being al-Thabat. In terms of its work with the state, it puts itself forward as a twin or partner, trying to convince it to accept it as a fifth authority in addition to the parliament, government, judicial authority, and the media. To this end, it has carved out a role in the areas of: the surveillance of state

institutions' performance; helping to build the state's capacity to run its affairs; enabling the implementation of government programmes; fighting corruption; effective financial resources management and promoting the importance of high quality education. The self confidence that has led to the CDF putting itself forward as playing this twin to the state role is obviously driven by their close relation to al-Sistani. In order to influence the state's constitution they organised a conference attended by 600 representing NGOs as well representatives of state institutions where they put forward their desired articles for inclusion. It has engaged in training and manufacturing new statesmen and women to lead the state as well as nominating and supporting independent candidates consider as being of good Muslim character for parliament. Through its proposal to partner the state, the CDF has been positioning itself as an alternative to political parties as well as to clergymen's rule, but still acts as a channel so that the views of al-Marja'iyya can have an impact on the state's institutions. However, because it is not linked to a political party, it has to continually work to convince those in charge of the state that it has a useful role to play in state building at this level.

The other arm of the CDF is its link to member organisations, through which it can put them in contact with statesmen and women. Although the CDF do not provide social assistance or financial support to those in need, they benefit from their linked NGOs who take an active role in mobilising people for elections, through their member organisations. In so doing, the CDF appear to take an indirect role in promoting clientelism through their sister organisations, such as al-Thabat. Educating citizens in line with Islam is a very important strategy for the Quietists, for they rely on the Muslim voters to ensure that Muslim Shi'a candidates are elected. In sum, although the CDF and through it the al-Marja'iyya, would appear on face value to be supporting the Shi'a-led state on a voluntary basis, they are motivated, like al-Mehrab, in wanting to play a greater role in the state.

9.4.3 The grassroots Quietist NGO: al-Thabat

al-Thabat, as explained in chapter 3, began as a network of pious Shi'a middle class women who were eager to conduct Shi'a rituals. This group was turned into an NGO later on and then joined the CDF; the umbrella organisation. It joined the other Shi'a NGOs in CDF with the aim of achieving the shared goals with regards to politics and enhancing the devotion of the Shi'a. This NGO is linked also to the Wakil of al-Sistani and has no links to any political party. Despite the fact that al-Thabat is a local, small NGO in comparison to others, such as al-Mehrab, it has emerged as being engaged, like other Islamic NGOs, in the three aforementioned connected roles: social service provision, by providing Khums to widows; influencing women service users' religious devotion through mourning rituals and also having a political role, but not as explicit as the other two focal NGOs. The NGO's main influence is through social services provision and weekly ritual sessions: Majalis al-Hussain. While the former plays the role of bringing widowed women to the organisation, the second has an impact in terms of shaping their attitudes regarding devotion to the Shi'a and Ahl-al-Bayt.

Through the rituals, the NGO is able to inform the participants about the correct religious behaviour for it to fit with Islam. Al-Thabat also uses the rituals to remind the participants about the historical oppression of the Shi'a and the importance of showing their devotion to the Imams, by supporting the sect against its enemies. At election times they tell the women that it is their duty to vote for Shi'a candidates. This political activity is important, because as Quietists they do not believe the clergy should govern, so they try to ensure the next best thing, the election of well respected Islamic Shi'a candidates. By mobilising their service users in this way, al-Thabat is acting similarly to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah, however, their preferred candidates have to be endorsed by al-Marja'iyya and are not simply voted for according to their political party. Because this NGO is not connected to the state, it receives no state funding and so far has refused tied international support that it believes would compromise its mission. Moreover, attempts to obtain other financial resources have failed and so it relies almost entirely on donors, Kofala

(plural Kafil) to make religious donations, such as Sadaqqa as well as the fees collected from the mourning sessions. Hence, this organisation can be described as a grassroots one with locally sourced funding and no political affiliation and yet, its operations still involve the interconnected roles, of social provision, religious dissemination and political persuasion, just like the other NGOs in this research. Through its operations, al-Thabat has been developing a pattern of clientelism that involves seeking the votes of both poor widows and middle class women who attend their mourning sessions, in order to get their preferred candidates elected.

From the above overview of the roles of the Activist and Quietist Shi'a NGOs, it can be concluded that they are all engaged in a political mission aimed at enhancing the role of the Shi'a, whether it be through their support for political parties or the backing of individual independent candidates who emulate al-Marja'iyya. They are keen to provide for the needs of their communities and influencing their religious behaviour. Some, like al-Mehrab and the CDF, have worked top down by involving themselves in such matters as the drawing up of the constitution and state building. Whilst others, such as al-Thabat, have used their charitable activities and rituals to become politically engaged bottom up through mobilisation of their constituency, to ensure that not only are appropriate Islamic candidates elected, but also that society's morals and behaviour are brought in line with Islam. Despite the fundamental differences in the way the focal Shi'a NGOs operate when compared to religious NGOs in other settings, at the heart of their social welfare provision is the common aim of building support for their political objectives or ensuring that certain individuals and groups gain power.

Moreover, the CDF has set it itself to work horizontally by influencing the state through its involvement in training of politicians and personnel in the government institutions, thereby trying to garner support for it becoming the fifth authority of the state. Whilst, al-Mehrab, through its education programmes is working to manufacture good Shi'a Moslems for tomorrow. In sum, all three of the focal NGOs are working to ensure the Shi'a retain power and although they employ different means to do so, there has quite clearly been a blurring of the boundaries between

the Activist and Quietist missions. Next, the idea of their being a process of Shi'aisation taking place in contemporary Iraqi society put forward using the evidence gathered for this research.

9.5 Islamisation or Shi'aisation

In order to serve their aims, the cultural framing of the Shi'a NGOs cause differs from that of Muslim Sunni organisations. The latter evolved around addressing the socioeconomic concerns of the poor; opposing a secular state; being against imperialism and vilifying Western culture (Wiktorowicz, 2004, Harmsen, 2008); proposing Islam as a solution to the economic, social and political challenges. By contrast, the Shi'a NGOs' activities are underpinned by their perceived historical oppression of the Shi'a or *Mathlomiyyat al-Shi'a*. As a result, addressing the social and economic challenges is not the main driver for mobilising support for their movement, but rather to create followers of Ahl-al-Bayt from amongst the people who were oppressed by the previous regime. That is, the Shi'a have striven for political power not to correct the economic system, but to bring justice for the Shi'a. Moreover, unlike Islamic Sunni NGOs they do not have the ultimate goal of creating Islamic Ummah for the entire world and instead limit their aspiration to protecting their denomination from religious and political oppression. The Shi'a historical grievances are centred on the murdering of their Imams; being banned from exercising their rituals and having to face severe religious and political oppression that lasted for centuries. Thus, the post war era has been seen as a historical moment by the Islamic Shi'a NGOs for them to serve their sect in the new political settlement.

Drawing on the Islamisation concept and from the evidence gathered regarding the Islamic Shi'a NGOs' work in their communities, it would appear that this does not capture completely the means by which they are trying to exert a profound influence on the state and society or the content of their programmes. For it fails to incorporate the distinct Shi'a aspects of promoting the Shi'a revival through ritual practice and awareness raising about Shi'a history. Thus, it is contended that the

notion of 'Shi'aisation' is better able to explain the political influence of these NGOs. Although this term has only been put forward on rare occasions in the literature⁵⁸, I believe it is important because it refutes the perspective that there is only one version of Islam.

Shi'aisation refers to a political process that has the aim of shaping the lay Shi'a's social and political behaviour in line with the Shi'a doctrine. This is driven by the objective of deepening their adherence to their Imams, their religious teaching, their denomination and to supporting Shi'a political groups. It involves a gradual shift in ways of thinking and the state's extant policies⁵⁹ and laws away from any notion of secularism, with the ultimate goal of consolidating the Shi'a in the Islamic state apparatus. Political Shi'aisation has been promoted through the introduction of a constitution that permits the sect to follow its preferred practice in regard to family affairs and through ensuring that the Shi'a only vote for Islamic Shi'a political groups. In fact, it has been strongly advocated that voting for Shi'a political parties or individuals is an integral part of being a Shi'a⁶⁰. The process has been enhanced through the implementation of Fatwa by al-Marja'iyya's, which urge the manifestation of loyalty to the Shi'a Imams and Ahl-al-Bayt, when the religious authority deems it necessary, because it believes that political action is needed to protect the Ummah. Such action reveals that even the Quietist clergy are prepared to intervene indirectly so as to guide the Ummah towards the creation of an Islamic Shi'a state

⁵⁸ Jennifer Creasy (2009) has studied this concept in her research titled: "The religious identity of the Hazaras of Afghanistan and modern-day Pakistan".

⁵⁹ In 2014, the Ministry of Justice proposed the al-Jafari laws based on an idea articulated by the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq, in the eighth century (Al-Qazwini, 2013: 5). This has the goal of replacing the personal statutes code of Iraq, issued in 1958, that granted women better rights. The proposed law has provoked a lot of debate since it allows girls aged 9 to marry, as this age is considered to be the age of maturity. This law, if approved, will represent the success of a social policy driven by the Shi'a doctrine aimed at Shi'aising society. Islamic Shi'a NGOs, in particular women's organisations have demonstrated in Basra and Baghdad in support of this law Cited on: (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/iraq-jaafari-draft-law-human-rights.html#>). Accessed on 08-10-2014]

⁶⁰ In my interview with a manager of a Shi'a school of al-Mehrab he expressed frustration that they were only allowed to alter 20% of the curriculum to include new classes to educate about the Shi'a doctrine.

The narrative employed to push Shi'aisation forward includes urging the lay Shi'a to show their love, and loyalty to Ahl-al-Bayt (descendent of Mohammad's family); accepting adherence to the Imams and al-Marja'iyya, and having faith in the return of the hidden Imam, al-Mahdi; and seeking the Imams' intercession to assist them in facing their difficulties in life, which will be granted if they follow a righteous path. Deepening loyalty to Imams is achieved through Shi'a rituals, such as attending mourning sessions of Majalis al-Hussain and participating in Muharram and Ashura, which demonstrate commitment to the memory of the Shi'a martyrs; an act that is seen as blessed and rewarded by God and the Imams. Through the widespread rolling out of these activities the martyrs' tragedies are promoted all year long by the Shi'a NGOs, thus keeping them continually in the public's memory.

Shi'aisation is also promoted through limiting the social service distribution to Shi'a denomination members; the Khums collection is only redistributed to the followers of Imam Ali. Shi'a NGOs, such as al-Mehrab's commitment to shaping the values and knowledge of the new generation from an early age by teaching about Ahl-al-Bayt, providing religious advice and instructing them about their daily behaviour are also actions supporting this project. These NGOs deter people from expressing their will through Western style protest by restricting their democratic input to voting in elections. However, because the Shi'a electorate are informed that it is their duty to vote for Islamic Shi'a parties or respected individuals from the sect, they are in essential cutting off any opposition to the Shi'aisation process.

Finally, the Shi'aisation is not confined to the cultural and religious arena, for it also would appear to have the goal of creating a theocratic state, as in Iran. The difference, however, is that the religious and political organisations in Iraq did not choose to follow the path of Iran's Activists, but rather, adopted al-Sistani's Quietist strategy. That is, they did not aim to create an Islamic state top down by establishing Welayat al-Faqih, and instead engaged in a bottom up process through manufacturing Shi'a voters who would vote in a Shi'a government that supported the creation of a theocratic state.

To summarise, the Islamic Shi'a NGOs appear to represent a new phenomenon that has contributed to both human and state building in line with Shi'a teachings in Iraq post 2003, when new political opportunities were opened up for the sect. They have worked alongside political groups and/or the religious Marja'iyya to ensure the Shi'aisation of Iraq. Thus, their emergence post 2003 fits with the contention that NGOs in the Middle East have invariably been established during times of fundamental political change (Benedetti, 2006). However, they have added a new dimension to the concept of Islamisation by following a highly sectarian mission that favours the creation of a Shi'a Islamic state, which can best be described as the Shi'aisation of Iraq.

9.6 Limitations

Given the novelty of this subject, there was a dearth of literature on this topic and that which was available came mainly from practitioners rather than from academia. This is despite the fact that there are a number of studies concerning the Activist and the Quietist trends within the Shi'a sect in Iraq, also some work has been carried out regarding the role of al-Marja'iyya and the role of political groups. However, no prior research has investigated Shi'a NGOs, or those linked to these two trends. As a result, no well developed theoretical model could be applied to the field, which meant I could only refer to indirectly related literature and the views of academics with some prior understanding, mainly in Western contexts, when deciding the most appropriate way to pursue the empirical work. Consequently, there is no way of verifying whether or not the adopted field work method and the chosen organisations were optimal for the inquiry, which is perhaps a key limitation of the research. However, from a different perspective I was presented with only a general perspective regarding how religious NGOs function through the interconnection of charitable donation, religion and politics, which left me with a significant degree of freedom in choosing my research trajectory.

Although there are many Shi'a NGOs, time constraints and other logistical issues compelled me to focus only on three of them. Some of those not investigated have

considerable capacity to serve their community, such as al-Sadr linked NGOs, which are Activist and linked to the cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, or another group of Husain al-Sadr NGOs, which are linked to the Quietest Marja; the men are cousins. Had other NGOs, such as these been investigated, other aspects regarding Islamic NGO operations could have come to light and hence, it was not possible to claim that the findings were fully comprehensive.

Given the post conflict setting when the field work took place, it was difficult to gain access to NGOs of interest. There was certainly a degree of mistrust by some, seeing me as an outsider. Moreover, there was a general atmosphere of fear, given the regular bombings and kidnappings across the country. Clearly, this limited the scope of the enquiry as well as the degree to which people felt safe to express themselves openly. In fact, at no time did the service users want me to be present during interactions with the NGOs. Despite these difficulties, I believe I navigated them to best of my ability and hence, vouch for the high quality of the data I collected.

Finally, I only made informal contact with service users and with hindsight, I think it would have been beneficial to seek their views on the operations of the NGOs with which they were associated and their level of satisfaction with what was on offer. However, although this would have allowed for triangulation of the collected data, in the above described environment this would have been almost impossible to achieve. Also, honest views shared with a stranger were unlikely to be obtained in this cultural setting as Moslems would consider they were being ungrateful if they commented negatively about the service providers.

9.7 Future research

Given the limitations of this thesis, there are a number of aspects that need further investigation in future work, whether in regard to Islamic Shi'a NGOs in Iraq, or others related to the post war political settlement. In particular, issues relating to the role of women and Iran's role in Shi'a NGOs in Iraq require further study.

This research has provided insights into Shi'a rituals in Iraq that are practised by women regarding how these are used to inform women religiously so as to Islamize their behaviour. However, the function of rituals are almost absent in the literature on Iraq, despite the fact that they have attracted the attention of academia in many other places of the world. From my personal observation, practising Shi'a rituals is one of the demarcating features of the post war era that have been widely promoted by both the state and non-state organisations. The question as to whether this religious practice has contributed to post war state building on a massive scale is worth examining, for the findings from this research indicate that Shi'a rituals in Iraq are not purely religious devotional acts, but rather would appear to include a political aspect.

Another group of Islamic NGOs that needs exploring is the Islamic Sunni ones in Iraq. From my visits to this country, I became aware of some aspects of their activities, but did not have the resources or time to probe their activities in the same way as for the focal Shi'a NGO. What would be particularly beneficial to examine in future work is how these NGOs have been operating in the era of the Shi'a revival and whether they are similar to their Shi'a counterparts or not. Such investigation would provide insights into how these NGOs act in a sectarian environment, in particular, regarding whether their *modus operandi* mirrors closely that of their Shi'a counterparts or not.

One of the issues that was reported with some delicacy by representatives of some of the NGOs was the role of Iran and the degree to which it has been involved in supporting the Activist NGOs' activities. The interviewees mentioned that Iranian Shi'a NGOs do operate in Iraq, such as al-Khomeini's NGO in Najaf and so too, Lebanese affiliated ones, such the Marja'iyya Fadlullah, which runs a large health project. This provision of the Shi'a religious establishment from Iran or Lebanon requires exploration, but would require a lot of tact and diplomacy, for I found people quite reluctant to share their knowledge about such matter. However, comparative between Shi'a NGOs across the Middle East would be quite straightforward and would help elicit the degree to which others have employed

the historical oppression of the Shi'a to mobilise their constituency in era of the Arab spring that has resulted in an escalation of inter-sect and intra-sect conflict

Finally, through this thesis I have reached a conclusion in line with Davis and Robinson (2012) that Islamic NGOs in the Middle East usually share three interconnected objectives, social, religious and political and consequently set up their activities so as to fulfil these. The question then arises as to whether Islamic Shi'a NGOs based in the West, exhibit a similar interconnected configuration in their practice or something else, which hence requires further investigation.

Final thoughts

This thesis has painted a picture of the main roles that are carried by the Shi'a NGOs. It has opened the door to the world of Islamic NGOs in Iraq and their relations with political and religious leaders in, a country that is permeated with religious conflict, wherein the Shi'a and Sunni have confronted each other not only politically but even militarily. The confrontation has currently reached its peak with ISIS, a Sunni group, fighting against the Shi'a government (Zassras, 2014), and al-Sistani having issued a Fatwa for a Jihad (Islamic war) to confront them. Given the Shi'a NGOs investigated recognise that their fortune is closely linked to that of the Shi'a led state, they will no doubt use all their energy to mobilise the people in support of the Fatwa, as they did to get their preferred government elected.

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Appendix 1: Iraqi national election results 2005, 2010 and 2014

Table (1) shows the results of the first provisional elections for the assembly January 2005⁶¹.

Name of the electoral bloc	Seats won out of 275	Affiliation
United Iraqi Alliance	140	Shi'i alliance including SCIRI, Da'awa, Sadrists and Fadhila
Kurdistan Alliance	75	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)
Iraqiyah	40	Secular alliance including Allawi's INA
Others	20	Sunni tribal party, Independent Sadrist; Communist, Secular, Christian; Shi'i candidates

Table (2) shows the results of the first national elections in December 2005.

Name of the electoral bloc	Seats won out of 275	Affiliation
United Iraqi Alliance	128	Shi'i alliance including SCIRI, Da'awa, Sadrists and Fadhila
Kurdistan Alliance	53	KDP and PUK
Twafiq	44	Secular alliance including Allawi's INA
Iraqi National List	25	Secular list including INA
Hiwar	11	Sunni Arab list, ostensibly non-sectarian
Others	14	Kurdish Islamist; Independent Sadrist; Turkmen; and Christian

Table (3) shows the results of the second elections in March 2010⁶².

Name of the electoral bloc	Seats won out of 325	Affiliation
Iraqi National Movement (al-Iraqiyya)	91	A coalition of Shi'a, Sunni, secular and non-sectarian
State of Law Coalition	89	Predominantly Shi'a
National Iraqi Alliance	70	Shiite religious group that includes ISCI; Sadrists, breakaway Dawa party; the Islamic Virtue Party (Fadhilah),

⁶¹ Independent High Electoral Commission, names of the winners of the first election, (in Arabic), IHEC, 2005, available online at <<<http://www.ihec-iq.com/ftpar/election2004/other/name2.pdf>>>, accessed on 30 November 2010.

⁶² Smith (2010: 8)

		the Shi'a Turkmen Movement, and other parties ⁶³ .
Kurdistan Alliance	43	Consisted of PUK and KDP
Others	32	

Table (4) shows the results of the third elections in April 2014 for 328 seats in parliament⁶⁴.

Name of the electoral bloc	Seats won out of 328	Affiliation
State of Law	92	Dawa Party led by the previous prime minister al-Maliki
Sadrist Movement	34	
Kurdish Parties	62 (combined)	KDP, PUK and Gorran
Al-Ahrar	28	Sadrist and other Shi'a groups
Muwatin (Citizen Bloc)	29	ISCI list. including other Shi'a politicians
Mutahidoun Bloc	23	Sunni Arab Speaker of Parliament, Osama al-Nujaifi,
Wataniya list	21	Mixed list of secular and Sunni groups and individuals
Al-Arabiya list	9	Sunni groups and individuals
Fadilah Party	Unavailable	
Da'wa (Jaafari) (205)	Unavailable	

⁶³ Smith, B. 2010, The parliamentary election in Iraq, March 2010 (p7).

⁶⁴ Katzman, K., 2014. Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights. Congressional Research Service7-5700. [Online] Available from: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf> [Accessed 11Oct 2014].

Appendix 2: List of interviews used for this research

First part of Code indicates position of interviewee:

SM: Senior manager E: Employer SU: Service user PP: Political party

R: representative RA: Religious authority L: Lecturer

Second part of Code indicates name of organisation.

Seq	Code	Organisation Name	Organisation Type	Date	Location
1	SM M1	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	10 Jan 2013	Baghdad
2	SM M2	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	10 Mar 2013	Najaf
3	RA M3	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	10 Mar 2013	Najaf
4	SM M4	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	11 Mar 2013	Najaf
5	SM M5	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	11 Mar 2013	Najaf
6	SM M6	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	12 Mar 2013	Najaf
7	SM M7	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	12 Mar 2013	Najaf
8	E M8	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	13 Mar 2013	Najaf
9	SM M9	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	13 Mar 2013	Najaf
10	SM M10	Al-Mehrab	Shi'a NGO	14 Mar 2013	Najaf
11	SM I1	ISCI	Political Party	12 Jan 2013	Baghdad
12	SM C1	CDF	Shi'a NGO	10 Oct 2011 30 Mar 2013	Baghdad
13	SM C2	CDF	Shi'a NGO	14 Oct 2011 23 Mar 2013	Baghdad
14	RA C3	Al-Marja'iyya Office	Shi'a NGO	14 Oct 2011	Baghdad
15	SM T1	Al-Thabat	Shi'a NGO	24 Jan 2013	Baghdad
16	SM T2	Al-Thabat	Shi'a NGO	24 Jan 2013	Baghdad

17	SU T3	Al-Thabat	Public	24 Jan 2013	Baghdad
18	SM AM1	Ahali al-Madina Assembly	Shi'a NGO	26 Jan 2013	Baghdad-Al-Sadr City
19	SM WC1	Women Centre for progress	Secular-Women NGO Baghdad	27 Mar 2013	Baghdad
20	SM WC2	Women Centre for progress	Secular – Nation wide	27 Mar 2013	Baghdad
21	SM A1	Al-Amal Association	Secular NGO	18 Feb 2013	Baghdad
22	SM CA	Culture for All	Secular NGO	20 Feb 2013	Baghdad
23	SM WS1	Ministry of work and Social Affairs. Work and employment	State Institution	31 Jan 2013	Baghdad
24	SM WS2	MWSA- Social Research department	State Institution	31 Jan 2013	Baghdad
25	SM P1	Ministry of Planning- Population policies	State Institution	20 Oct 2011 12Mar 2013	Baghdad
26	SM UN1	UNDP	International Organisations	25Mar 2013	Baghdad
27	SM ND1	NGOs Directorate	State Organisation	04 Mar 2013	Baghdad
29	L PS1	Lecturer - Political Sciences	Academia	03Mar 2013	Baghdad
30	R PP	A Representative of Iraqi secular party	Politician	18 Mar 2013	Baghdad

Appendix 3: Interview topic sheets

1) Topic sheet with Shi'a NGOs

• Historical Background

- Personal Motivation
- Year the organisations established
- The founders, their educational and professional backgrounds
- Institutional: Values, resources

• Organisational information

- Number of people are employed
- Number volunteers
- The size of the organisation/ branches in other cities/ countries
- The size of yearly budget
- The main areas of action
- The professional and educational backgrounds of the employees, volunteers
- The professional and educational backgrounds
- The main sources of funding?

• Organisation's Connections

- Connections to national government, governmental institutions
- Work in partnership with the state
- Connections to political parties/ religious, secular
- Connections to Religious authorities
- Connections to International organisations/ donors
- Connections to local governments
- Connections to peer organisations/ religious, secular
- Local or central welfare administration offices?

• The NGOs aims and motivations

- The motivation of establishment of the NGO

- The mission and vision of the organisation
- The role of NGO in the social welfare provision
- The main concepts
 - Solidarity
 - Human well being
 - Social welfare
 - Poverty relief
 - Social justice
 - Gender/family
 - Political representation
 - Religious education
 - Other concepts guide work of the organization?

- **Welfare/other provisions**

- The criteria of choosing who to help
- The size of families or individuals the organisations supports
- The regularity of welfare provisions
- Political representation
- Elections and democratic process
- Women
- Equality
- Wealth distribution.

- **Operations and other activism**

- Aids. Services/ goods distribution
- Educational, Empowerment
- Political activities
- Religious activities
- The organisations' expectations of the services users
- Organisations needs for support of services users/ yes or no

- **The influence of the operation and activism**

- Satisfy community's needs
- Raising awareness/ what issues
- Increasing membership
- Monitored demands for the services
- Advocacy

- **The ways to monitor the influence**

- Feedbacks collected/ verbal/ written/other methods
- By who/ members/ upper authorities/both?

2) Topic sheet with the State organisations

The government vision of social policies

- The vision of government on human needs fulfilment
- State responsibility/ which areas.
- Government vision of state intervention: family, elderly, children- needs
- Culture impact on social welfare
- Tribes impact on social welfare

- **Definition of Key Concepts**

- NGOs
- State responsibility of welfare provision
- Human Needs
- Representation
- Political awareness
- Citizenship
- Wealth Redistribution
- Other concepts guide work of the government

- **Government's operations**

- Areas of state intervention

- Family, elderly, children- needs
- Education, Health, Social service, Housing, Employment

- **The finance of social policies**

- The resource to finance social policies
- The impact of oil on social policy in Iraq
- Any plan to reduce reliance on oil?
- International donors
- Religious authorities
- Private sector

- **The government vision of the role of NGOs in welfare provision**

- Welfare provision, democratisations: good/bad
- Nonreligious organisations intervention in welfare provision, democratisation: good/ bad
- The role of IOs in funding social policies
- The role of local governments, city councils in welfare provisions
- Religious institutions' intervention
- Relations between social welfare role and Islamic political parties
- Other concepts guide governmental policies

- **The government coordination with NGOs**

- Relative/absolute importance for social policy
- Government partnerships/contracts with NGOs
- The criteria to select organisations to work with
- The governments fund to the NGOs/criteria
- NGOs role: implementation or partnering state in delivering policies

- **The impact of the operation and activism of NGOs**

- The impact of NGOs provision for those in need
- Measurement of impacts
- Forms of monitoring the NGOs performances

- Ways to correct NGOs behaviours

3) Topic sheet with the Interantional Organisations

• Historical Background

- Personal Motivation
- Institutional: Values, resources

• Objectives and Present Role

- IOs vision of Social Policies in Iraq
- Definition of social policy by the organisation
- Moral values underpinning the IOs vision of social policy
- The IOs objectives of Social policies - aims
- The main strategized changes in social policy after April 2003.
- Main challenges in the present, and for the future
- How are social policies designed and evaluated
- The social security system in Iraq
- The role of gender: in policy making and policy outcomes
- The role of the family
- Financing of social policy
- The role of religion in social policies

• NGOs Role in Social Policies

- IOs proposition of the establishment of the NGOs
- IOs current policies and programs towards the NGOs
- The IOs expectations of the NGOs
- The obstacles of the NGOs in Iraq
- The strengths of these organisations
- The priorities of NGOs

Giving a voice for marganilised groups

Partnering up the state in welfare provision

Democratisation of the society

Watching governmental preformnces,

Accountability of the state's institutions

- Patterns of actions: implementation state policies or partnering the state in delivering these policies.

- **How the IOs cooperate with the NGOs**

- Consultation with NGOs
- The main areas that IOs empower NGOs
- Partnerships: bring state and NGOs to work together
- Partnering up with NGOs to implement policies
- Other forms of cooperations
- Relations with other local or national institutions
- The perception of differences with non religious organisations in welfare provision
- Perception and evalution of welfare provided by religious political parties
- General role of religion: good/bad?

- **The influence of the operaton and activisim of NGOs**

- The impact of NGOs provision on those in needs
- Measurment of impacts
- Forms of monitoring the NGOs partners.

4) Topic sheet with the Religious Estabilshment

- **Historical Background**

- Personal Motivation:
- Institutional: Values, resources

- **Religious Authorties Vision and Practice**

- Human needs fulfilment
- Religious institutons's role
- Influence, and role of Islamic values: e.g. zakat, waqf, other charties

- State's role
- NGO's role

• **How concerned are Islamic teachings with issues of**

- Social welfare
- Poverty
- Social justice
- Gender/family
- Charity; volunteer/voluntary
- Wealth distribution

• **What the RAs seek to achieve**

- Current services and functions
- Welfare provision for those in need
- Other provisions they offer
- Other concepts guide their work

• **Relations with other institutions in terms of welfare provision**

- International Organisations
- Donors/secular, religious, local, International
- Government (if any)
- What shape/form?
- Religious NGOs
- Non Religious NGOs
- Political parties?
- Other religious groups in Iraq

• **The Welfare provision of the RA**

- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Children

- Women
- Family
- Religious teachings
- Political representation
- Equality
- Gender equality
- Wealth distribution
- Poverty relief

• **The impact of the operation and activism of NGOs**

- The impact of NGOs provision for those in need
- Measurement of impacts
- Forms of monitoring the NGOs performances

5) Topic sheet with service users

• **Personal needs**

- Kind of needs
- How often they need the organisation's support; one off or repeated.
- How they contact the organisation
- How the organisation respond, by whom
- Reasons to contact the organisation
- The expectations of the organisation

• **The relation with the NGOs**

- Introduction and contact with the organisation
- Main services and/or goods received/how often
- Political, religious, or other supply.
- The beneficiaries involvement with the organisations
- Obligations towards the organisation
- The sustainability of relation with the organisation

- **Service users' perception**

- The role of NGOs in welfare provision
- Areas and activities
- Accountable to respond to their needs

- **NGOs welfare provision influence**

- On the beneficiary's social life,
- The human needs/which areas
- Obligations attached to reception of the welfare provision
- Feeling towards perceived goods/services, right or favour
- Replacement of the state provision,
- Satisfaction and fulfilling the urgent needs.
- Comparison between state, and the NGOs welfare provision, how and why?

Appendix 4: Topic sheet about the research

Title of Project:

The Politics of Welfare Provisions of Religious NGOs in Iraq.

Purpose of the Study:

This study seeks to understand the role of religious, and non religious NGOs established after 2003 in providing welfare to those in need, and seeks to understand how these organisations contribute in the new social policies.

The aim of this study is to better understand the motivations of the three influential institutions: the International organisations, the Iraqi governments, the Religious authorities, in empowering NGOs role in social policies. This study aims to generate information on motivations and operations of the NGOs in the areas that defined as Shi'a populated, and Sunni populated areas.

The research aims at studying the NGOs senior managers, staff and volunteers' understanding of this role in the society, whether it is charity organisations, religious, or political organisations, or combination of all these roles.

This research aims also to scrutinize the activism of the NGOs and what impact does their work have on those in need. To achieve this aims, the instrument that will be used consisted of two major researching activities: *first* studying and analyzing documents published by policy makers and *second*, interviewing those who are involved in different aspects of these organisations' work.

What the research involves:

The first phase of data will be collected through studying related documents published by state and non state organisations, this include constitutions; laws, protocols, agreements, reports and other related documents.

The second phase of data collection will involve in depth interviews with representatives of the four groups mentioned above. This will be carried out with each participant who is selected purposively. The interviews will be taken in a safe environment, in a confidential manner. Forms of consent will be submitted to participants for their signature. Verbal consent will be taken into consideration for those reluctant from giving their written signatures.

The interviews will be held with: representatives of international organisations representatives; the government representatives; the local authorities' representatives; the religious authorities' representatives; the senior managers of NGOs; the staff and volunteers; and with a number of services users as it agrees with their managers. The researcher will code the data in order to analyse and submit it in a written report.

Confidentiality

The written, and recorded information rendered by interviewees will be kept in a safe confidential place. They will be used only for research purposes. No names of the informants will be published, the anonymity of those provide information will be strictly protected. Audio tapes will be locked in a safe or carried on the researcher exclusively and not handled by any other persons related or unrelated to the project. Audio and subsequent transcripts will not be made available to anyone. The information will be coded, and only the researcher will be able to link the code to the participants.

Benefits:

All participants in this research are taking part by sharing their experiences with the researcher on voluntary basis. There will be no financial rewards or in kind and/ or in cash for these contribution. The interviews will be taken in suitable at convenient time for the interviewees. The research once it's conducted will be published and

the information that may help those who are working in this issue to have some knowledge and a better understanding of the role of these organisations in social policies.

Right of participants:

Participation is completely voluntary. If consent is given to take part, still the interviewees are able to stop the interview at any stage; they could, if they wish, to accompany other people to attend, if they decide to do so. There is an email address at the end of this sheet, if the participants wish to support their answers, or share any other information with the researcher. Whilst it would be most helpful to answer all the questions asked, however, if the participants feel strongly that they do not wish to answer any questions the researcher will move on to the next question.

An introduction of the research will be given to the participants prior to the interviews take place. Audio record will be used in order to keep all given information stored. The researcher will use notes through the interviews. The researcher will seek the interviewees' information and knowledge; yet, the interviewees could add or elaborate and share any information they think that could shed light on some aspects of the issue in question.

The participants have all the right to ask any question prior to starting the recording, regarding this research, and they may ask any question through out the process of the interviews. The aim is to have safe, and comfortable and confidential atmosphere to conduct the interviews. Any questions that participants have, or for any other information that could be rendered to the researcher this could be done through the email: jaj35@bath.ac.uk.

Appendix 5: Information about the research in Arabic.

ورقة معلومات عن البحث

الموضوع: مشروع اطروحة لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه في العلوم الاجتماعية- السياسات الاجتماعية.

عنوان البحث: دور منظمات المجتمع المدني ذات الطابع الديني في السياسات الاجتماعية⁶⁵ في العراق بعد عام 2003.

اسم الطالبة: جنان الجابري.

J.aljabiri@bath.ac.uk

جهة البحث: جامعة باث- قسم الدراسات الاجتماعية.

تاريخ ومدة البحث: ايلول 2010- الى اب 2013.

المشرفون على البحث: الدكتورة رنا جواد- محاضرة في جامعة باث، و الدكتور جو دايفس.

R.jawad@bath.ac.uk

هدف البحث:

يسعى البحث الى:

اولاً: فهم طبيعة و اغراض السياسات الاجتماعية في العراق المطروحة من قبل الدولة في العراق. ثانياً ضمن هذا الاطار يسعى البحث الى فهم دور منظمات المجتمع المدني ذات الطابع الديني في تلك السياسات. و بهذا يسعى الى فهم اهم برامج هذه المنظمات في تقديم الخدمات، الاسهام في صياغة و تنفيذ السياسات الاجتماعية. ثالثاً: فهم التاثير الذي احدثه هذا الدور على المواطنين المحتاجين الى مساعدة بشكل خاص، و على المجتمع بشكل اعم.

⁶⁵السياسات الاجتماعية وتعني اهم الاستراتيجيات والخطط التي تستهدف اشباع حاجات المواطن، والتي تشمل: التشغيل، التعليم، الصحة، الاسكان، الرعاية الاجتماعية، و بشكل عام رفاه الانسان. والتي تساهم فيها الدولة، منظمات المجتمع المدني، القطاع الخاص، و الاسرة على تليبيتها.

يتوخى البحث الوصول هدفه عبر الحوار واللقاء مع العاملين من المدراء و الموظفين و المتطوعين، في منظمات المجتمع المدني ومعرفة تصوراتهم ورائهم عن دور و وظيفة المنظمات التي يعملون فيها و دورها في المجتمع. سيتناول الحوار التعرف على فعاليات المنظمات و مدى تأثيرها على ذوي الحاجة، فيما اذا كانت تستجيب لحاجاته المادية كشخص محتاج، ام تستجيب لحاجاته كجزء من حقوقه كمواطن.

ما الذي يتضمنه البحث:

المرحلة الاولى تم التعرف على الوثائق الصادرة من قبل المنظمات غير الحكومية، القوانين و التشريعات الدستورية والصادرة من الجهات الرسمية في الدولة، وايضا التقارير والاصدارات الصادرة من قبل منظمات دولية مثل البنك الدولي. المرحلة الثانية من البحث تتم عبر اجراء مقابلات معمقة مع ممثلي منظمات المجتمع المدني، الوزارات العراقية ذات الشأن، مثل وزارتي التخطيط والعمل والشؤون الاجتماعية. سيقدم طلب الموافقة لكل مشارك من اجل الادلاء بموافقه/ا على المشاركة في المقابلة عبر توقيع ورقة القبول على اجراء مقابلة. الذين يفضلون اجراء المقابلة من غير توقيع، يمكن الاكتفاء باخذ موافقتهم بشكل شفهي فقط.

موثوقية المعلومات:

التزاما بالتعهدات الاكاديمية، المعلومات المكتوبة و المسجلة المقدمة من قبل المشاركين ستستخدم فقط للاجابة على اسئلة الاطروحة. لن تنشر اسماء المشاركين، وستكون في حوزة الباحثة فقط، و سيؤمن عدم الوصول الى الاجابات، او معرفة الاشخاص الذي اجابوا على الاسئلة. التسجيلات الصوتية ستحفظ في مكان امين مع الباحثة و لن يتم الاستماع اليها او الوصول اليها من قبل اي شخص اخر سواء كان يمت او لا يمت بصلة للاطروحة. النصوص المكتوبة عن المقابلات لن يسمح لاي احد بالاطلاع عليها. المعلومات ستكون معنونة و فقط الباحثة بإمكانها ان تربط بين المعلومات المعنونة و المشاركون الذين اجابوا على الاسئلة.

المنافع:

يشترك المساهمون في البحث، معرفتهم و تجربتهم و رؤيتهم في المقابلات، على اساس تطوعي. ليست هنالك اي مكافآت او مردود مالي باي شكل من المشاركة في هذا البحث. مواعيد المقابلات ستحدد في الاوقات التي يرتأىها المشاركون مناسبة و مريحة بالنسبة لهم. حال انجاز تقديم الاطروحة و قبولها من قبل الجامعة، سيتم نشرها، حيث من المؤمل ان تقدم فائدة علمية لكل العاملين في هذا القطاع، بتزويدهم بمعرفة و برؤية علمية حول دور هذه المنظمات في السياسات الاجتماعية.

حقوق المشاركين في البحث:

المشاركة في الاجابة على اسئلة الاطروحة عمل طوعي و بشكل تام. من حق المشاركين الانسحاب من المقابلة في اي وقت يرغبون فيه، حتى وان كانوا قد وقعوا بالموافقة على اجراء المقابلة. من حق المشاركين اصطحاب او استضافة اشخاص اخرين الى المقابلة اذا كانوا يرغبون بذلك. يمكن للمشاركين في حالة رغبتهم في تدعيم

الاجابات التي قدموها او اضافة معرفة جديدة الى البحث الاتصال بالباحثة خارج نطاق المقابلة عبر الاتصال الهاتفي او الاتصال البريد- الالكتروني. رغم انه سيكون من المفيد جدا الاجابة على كل الاسئلة المطروحة، الا ان المشاركين يمتلكون الحق في عدم الاجابة على اي سؤال لا يريدون الاجابة عليه، و سينتقل الباحث الى طرح اسئلة اخرى.

ستقوم الباحثة بتقديم نبذة عن البحث لكل المشاركين قبل الشروع باجراء المقابلة. سيجري استخدام جهاز تسجيل من اجل حفظ كل الاجوبة المقدمة الى الباحثة، كذلك ستدون الملاحظات خلال فترة المقابلة. الباحثة ستقوم بتوجيه الاسئلة الى المشاركين، الا ان بإمكانهم اضافة او التوسع او التطرق الى مواضيع اخرى لم تقم الباحثة بالتطرق اليها، مما يرويه قد يقدم خدمة للبحث و يلقي الضوء على جوانب اخرى من الاسئلة المطروحة.

من حق المشاركين توجيه اية اسئلة لديهم قبل الشروع باجراء المقابلة تتعلق بالبحث و يمكنهم توجيه الاسئلة خلال اي وقت في فترة اجراء المقابلات. الهدف هو ايجاد اجواء من الراحة و الثقة لاجراء المقابلة يجري فيها اشراك الباحثة بالمعرفة و التجربة التي يمتلكها المشارك في ميدان عمله، و التي تشكل الهدف الذي تسعى الباحثة الى التعرف عليه.

مع خالص الشكر و التقدير لموافقتكم في المساهمة في تدعيم البحث العلمي لدراسة ظاهرة منظمات المجتمع المدني في العراق، والذي يصب في خدمة معرفة طبيعة واغراض السياسات الاجتماعية في العراق بعد 2003.